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“IT’S ABOUT THE WHOLE SORT OF PICTURE”: COMPLEXITY,
CONFORMITY AND CONFUSION IN STUDENT TEACHERS’
UNDERSTANDING OF LEARNING TO READ.

By

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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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My thanks go to the student teachers who kindly gave me their time, to Catherine, Linden and particularly Viv, for their patience and belief and to Matthew and Rebecca for their proof reading, support and encouragement.

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Abstract

How we learn to read has been much debated, nationally and internationally. The aim of this study was to explore primary student teachers' understanding of reading, the effect of sociocultural beliefs and the relationship between student teachers' identity and their approaches to the learning and teaching of reading. Whilst there are many studies that explore Initial Teacher Education there appears to be little research exploring the effects of sociocultural beliefs on student teachers' understanding of reading.

This study was conducted within interpretivist paradigms, drawing upon a qualitative methodological approach to data collection and was influenced by the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach. The participants were five undergraduate student teachers enrolled on a three-year Initial Teacher Education programme at one Higher Education institution in the south-east of England.

The analysis of data revealed that multiple factors influenced the student teachers' understanding of reading, including intrinsic, extrinsic and sociocultural aspects, resulting in much complexity. Key findings of the research suggest that there is some disparity between the student teachers' beliefs about how we learn to read and the teaching of reading in the classroom, which results in some confusion. However, student teachers also make shifts in their identity as they adapt to the situation they are in and as they conform to prevailing discourses and respond to issues relating to power, resulting in them being able to balance different approaches. The data also revealed that there was a gap in the student teachers' knowledge and understanding relating to the social, historical, political and economic contexts of some pupil's families. The implications for teacher educators include addressing issues such as negative assumptions about some of the reading practices of families in the schools' communities.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates student teachers' understanding of reading. The participants were undergraduate student teachers enrolled on a three-year Initial Teacher Education programme at one Higher Education Institution in the south-east of England. The research investigation takes the form of a general qualitative education research project which examines the impact of sociocultural background on student teachers' views and understanding of reading.

The purposes of this chapter are to (a) provide an overview of the research, (b) describe the context of the research, (c) identify the research problem, (d) explain my conceptual framework, (e) outline the research questions, (f) provide a brief summary of the research design, and (g) explain the significance of the research.

Overview of the Research

Learning to read is essential in becoming a literate person and gives people access to improved life chances, increases their knowledge of the world around them, enhances their imagination and creativity and offers many opportunities for enjoyment (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). It is not surprising therefore, that governments across the world are keen to ensure that children reach certain standards in their reading ability.

This research explores the factors influencing student teachers' understanding of reading as they engaged in their Initial Teacher Education. In particular, the research

looks at how critical sociocultural theory can offer an explanation of the varying factors involved. The term ‘critical sociocultural theory’ was coined by Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2012: xi) in order to retain the constructs from sociocultural theory but also to include issues of power, identity and agency which they felt were central to literacy learning and practice. Aspects of critical sociocultural theory will be further discussed in Section 1.5. The aim of my research, therefore, was to enquire into the impact of sociocultural background on student teachers’ views of reading together with the implications of this for Initial Teacher Education providers.

My research focused on four main research areas:

- the factors influencing student teachers’ understanding of reading;
- the extent to which sociocultural beliefs impact on student teachers’ understanding of reading;
- the relationship between student teachers’ own identities and their approaches to the learning and teaching of reading;
- the potential implications for teacher training and education.

Student teachers from one Initial Teacher Education institution were investigated for the purposes of the research. The research drew upon qualitative methodologies to seek answers to the research questions outlined in Section 1.7 and constituted a general education research project. The aim of the research was to contribute to existing knowledge about learning to read and to develop a deeper understanding of student teachers’ insight as they become teachers of reading.

1.2 Research Context

There are various contexts providing a background for this research. This study was conducted in England and whilst part of the United Kingdom there are dissimilarities in the education systems of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. An outline of primary education in the United Kingdom and the variations between the four countries will be provided in Section 1.3.1. The history of policies and documents relating to the teaching of reading in England will be discussed in Section 1.3.2 with current trends in the teaching of reading in England discussed in Section 1.3.3.

1.2.1 Primary Education in the United Kingdom

Since the Act of Union (1707), each of the four countries of the United Kingdom have had separate education systems under their different governments. The UK Government is responsible for England, whilst the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive are responsible for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

In each country, there are five stages of education: early years, primary, secondary, further education (FE) and higher education (HE). Full time education is compulsory for all children between the ages of five (four in Northern Ireland) and sixteen. In England, compulsory education or training has been extended to eighteen for those born after 1 September 1997. FE is not compulsory and HE usually takes place in universities and other Higher Education Institutions and colleges. Full-time education does not need to be at a school and a number of parents choose to home educate their children.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland organise their education system according to key stages which identify the expected educational knowledge of children and students at

various ages. Prior to the four main key stages, children attend a Foundation stage, the latter of which is compulsory. Key Stage One fits broadly with the first stage of primary education for children of ages 5-7 with Key Stage Two being the stage for children aged 7-11. Secondary education is split between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Scotland has a different framework, with children completing seven years in primary school, starting in P1, which is equivalent to Year 1 in England, progressing up to P7 which is the equivalent of Year 7 in England. Following this, children complete six years of secondary school S1 – S6 (equivalent to Year 8 to Year 13 in England). All children are also entitled to receive a full academic year of pre-school education in the academic year before they are eligible to, and expected to, start primary school. Further information on ages and key stages is provided in Appendix A.

The National Curriculum (NC), established in 1995 and revised in 2013, provides a framework for education in England and Wales between the ages of 5 and 16 and sets out the programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects at the four key stages. All local-authority schools in England are required to follow the National Curriculum, although private schools, academies, free schools and home educators are able to design their own curricula.

Primary education in Wales has a similar structure to primary education in England, but teaching of the Welsh language is compulsory and it is used as the medium of instruction in many schools. From September 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced a new Foundation Phase for children from three to 7 year olds, which placed greater emphasis on experiential learning. In Scotland, the nearest equivalent to the National Curriculum is the Curriculum for Excellence programme, whilst all schools in

Northern Ireland follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum which is based on the National Curriculum used in England and Wales.

The major goals of primary education include achieving basic literacy and numeracy amongst all pupils, as well as establishing foundations in science, history, geography and other subjects. Children in England and Northern Ireland are assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, known as the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), although at Key Stage 1 this is conducted by teacher assessment. In Wales, all learners in their final year of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 must be assessed through teacher assessments. Currently Scotland does not assess primary and secondary students in key stages and there are no SATs. Teacher assessment is used instead to determine a child's abilities and readiness to progress. However, this is due to change from August 2017 with the introduction of new national standardised assessments for literacy and numeracy at P1, P4 and P7.

Schools in England are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, also known as Ofsted. In Scotland, the Care Inspectorate inspects care standards in pre-school provision with Education Scotland (formerly Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) conducting this for pre-school and primary education. The Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland and Estyn in Wales perform similar functions within their education systems.

My research was conducted in England and as such, it is this context to which is being referred. In addition, the student teachers were enrolled on an Initial Teacher Education programme and conducted their school teaching placements in the south-east county of Kent. With a land area of approximately 3,736 square kilometres and a population of just over 1,510,000, Kent has the largest population of all the English counties. Almost

three quarters of the population live in urban areas with the remaining living in rural areas. Data presented for the Kent County Council (2016) stated that as at August 2014, 17.9% of children (57,630 children) in Kent were living in poverty. This was above the regional average of 14.4% but below the England average of 19.9%. Of these children living in poverty, 26.9% live in two districts – Thanet and Swale. Thanet is within the top 20% of districts with the highest levels of child poverty in England.

In 2016 there were 122,020 children enrolled in primary schools in Kent. Of these 12.5% received free school meals, 11.7% were children with special educational needs, 11.4% had English as an additional language and 18.8% were minority ethnic. In 2015, 82% of primary schools in Kent were graded by the Office for Standards in Education as being good or outstanding (85% national figure), 16% required improvement (14% national figure) and 2% were graded as inadequate (1% national figure), (Kent County Council 2016a). Kent is also one of the fifteen areas in England who continue to provide selective secondary education.

1.2.2 Reading Policies and Documents

Over the decades, successive governments in England have produced various policies and documents addressing the teaching of reading. Definitions for the teaching of reading were stated in the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 1995) but this was then superseded by a series of revisions and additional policy interventions. One of these, The National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) was advocated as being the clearest remedy for raising standards in literacy, but this was again replaced following the *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (Rose, 2006). A full list of policies and documents since 1988 can be found in Appendix B.

In recent years, governments in England have advocated a single, universal and uniform conception of literacy with the teaching of reading in schools focusing on individual cognitive skills including systematic synthetic phonics. Current trends such as the use of systematic synthetic phonics will be discussed further in Section 1.3.3. As a result of this, Initial Teacher Education providers have been expected to modify their courses so that student teachers receive appropriate direction on the teaching of early reading (Ofsted 2012). Initial Teacher Education institutions are required to demonstrate the assessment of trainees' progress in the teaching of reading with student teachers identifying their strengths and steps for improvement in both their subject knowledge and professional practice particularly in systematic synthetic phonics.

1.2.3 Current Trends in the Teaching of Reading

The current methods of the teaching of early reading in England stems from the *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (2006) by Sir Jim Rose, also known as the Rose Review. This review was in response to a recommendation by the House of Commons Education Select Committee that there should be a government enquiry into the teaching of reading. It set out what it considered 'best' practice in the teaching of early reading, specifically the teaching of phonics and recommendations included:

- that high quality, systematic phonic work as defined by the review should be taught
- the knowledge, skills and understanding that constitute high quality work should be taught as the prime approach in learning to decode print (to read) and to encode (to write/spell)
- phonic work should be set within a broad and rich language curriculum

Much of the Rose Review's (2006) recommendations were based upon a seven-year longitudinal study by Johnston and Watson (2005) in Clackmannanshire, Scotland. This looked at 300 children in their first year of the Scottish primary school system and compared three different teaching methods: synthetic phonics; analytic phonics; and an analytic phonics method that included systematic phonemic awareness teaching. The synthetic phonics approach teaches children the phonemes (sounds) associated with particular graphemes (letter/s representing the sounds). Children begin by hearing phonemes in spoken words and blending them together orally. When reading, the individual phonemes are recognised from the grapheme, pronounced and then synthesised (blended together) to create the word. In analytic phonics, children identify the phonemes in whole words and are encouraged to segment the words into phonemes. They also analyse similar characteristics in words and recognise word families and patterns. At the end of the Clackmannanshire programme, the claims of the study were that children who had been taught using synthetic phonics were found to be on average seven months ahead of the other two groups in their reading. The synthetic phonics approach, as part of the reading curriculum, was thus considered more effective than the analytic phonics approach (Johnston and Watson, 2005).

However, the Clackmannanshire study has received much criticism. The methodology and design of the study has been considered as flawed, biased towards synthetic phonics and thus not able to draw conclusions about the superiority of one phonics teaching method against another (Goswami, 2007). A systematic review of the research literature on the use of phonics in the teaching of reading and spelling (Torgerson et al., 2006) found that the evidence was weak on whether synthetic approaches were more effective than analytical approaches. Similarly, the Rose Review (2006) has also been accused of being politically motivated rather than a truly 'independent' review (Gough and

Lambirth, 2011) and the policy decisions to promote synthetic phonics not being based on robust research evidence (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). Nevertheless, in 2006 and 2007, the recommendations of the Rose Review (2006) were included in statutory documentation enforcing the use of the synthetic phonics approach to the teaching reading.

The teaching of reading involves children understanding and comprehending their reading as well as being able to decode the text. The Rose Review addressed this by introducing the model of reading known as ‘The Simple View of Reading’ which recognised that reading is the product of word reading and language comprehension. As shown in Figure 1, this model proposes that reading entails the development of a set of processes by which the words on the page are recognised and understood. Both sets of processes are necessary for reading and neither is sufficient on its own. Children who cannot recognise the words on the page are prevented from fully understanding the text; however, recognising and understanding the words on the page is no guarantee that the text will be understood.

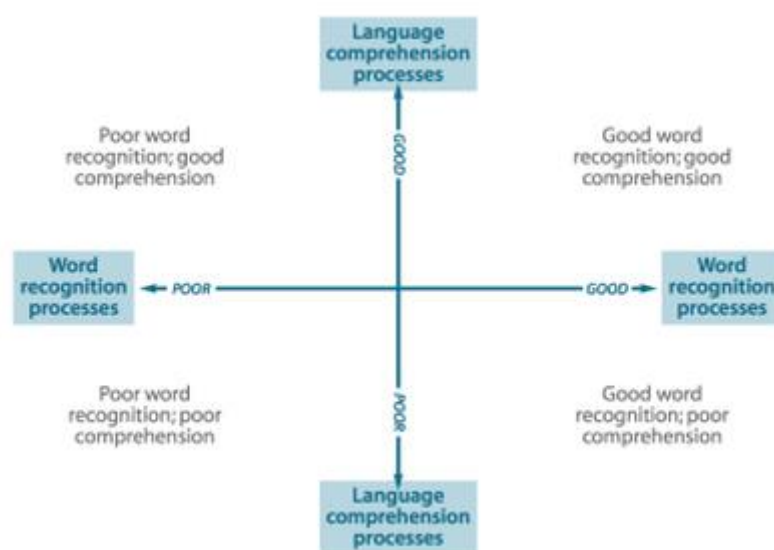


Figure 1: The Simple View of Reading (Rose 2006:77)

Since the publication of the Rose Review, its recommendations have been widely adopted by successive governments in England. Inspections by Ofsted monitor their adoption in both schools and Initial Teacher Education institutions, and the revised Teachers Standards in 2011 specified that in order to gain qualified teacher status trainees should, ‘if teaching, demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics’ (DfE 2011, para.3). Children in England are also currently assessed on their phonic knowledge when they are six years old.

It is not just in England that developing children’s early reading focused on the use of phonics. In the United States, the National Reading Panel report (2000) by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) investigated research into the teaching of reading and concluded that learning to read for most children was not a natural process and needed to include explicit, systematic instruction in phonics as well as instruction in comprehension skills and strategies. Similarly in Australia the Teaching Reading: Report and Recommendations (DEST, 2005) concluded that ‘direct systematic instruction in phonics in the early years of schooling is an essential foundation for teaching children to read’ (DEST, 2005:11). In 2015 revisions were made to the Australian Curriculum which included the increased presence of phonics and phonemic awareness, resulting in the sound and letter knowledge sub-strand of the language strand being renamed ‘phonic and word knowledge’.

1.3 Identification of the Research Problem

Learning to read successfully is a complex process and reliant upon the development of a range of skills and strategies (Wolfe, 2015). Over the decades, there have been many different ways of approaching the teaching of reading and these have tended to be either that of psycholinguistics or cognitive psychology. However, learning language,

including reading the written word can be considered to be culturally framed before children enter school. As such, literacy experiences in the home and communities also need to be recognised (Gee, 2004). Children have many reading experiences before they enter school (Goodman, 1996) in the form of sharing written texts or oral stories. Many will have had rich early reading experiences including the knowledge of how stories and texts work and their patterns and tunes (Barton, 1994). Thus, the learning and teaching of reading are 'human processes, subject to the uncertainties and unpredictability that comes within the socio-cultural diversity of human kind' (Goouch and Lambirth, 2007: 4). As teachers, we cannot force children into learning to read but we can entice them into the world of a reader through many different strategies - reading for pleasure, participation in reading, playing with stories and texts, and making sense of the alphabetic code.

Literacy educators and researchers have different perspectives on reading and there have been continuous debates about the best methods to teach reading, with arguments about how children learn to read continuing to make headline news. Learning to read is a complex issue and influenced by many factors such as parental and societal influences, children's understanding of the purposes and pleasure of reading, the range of skills that need to be taught and learnt and of course teacher expertise.

Research in the area of reading development and pedagogy is both numerous and diverse and there is no one theory which has been accepted by all. For student teachers a deep knowledge and understanding of the reading process includes that of the theoretical underpinnings but these theories, policies and teaching do not always fit into neat little boxes (Hall, 2003). This multiple perspective adds to the complexity of the learning and teaching of reading. The student teachers are our teachers of the future and thus the impact they have on the learning and teaching of reading will be far-reaching.

Currently, as a Senior Lecturer myself working in Initial Teacher Education with both undergraduate and postgraduate students, my work includes the field of teaching English at the primary phase and as such is concerned with research into the effective methods of teaching English. The aims of my study were therefore to gain an insight into the perspective of the student teacher and to acquire a deeper understanding of student teachers' understanding of the reading process and the influences and factors involved in this.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

My own professional background is firmly placed in the teaching of English, with both children in primary school and student teachers in higher education. My own beliefs concerning the teaching of reading relate to the view that children's learning and in particular, learning about reading is a complex process. Learning language, either spoken or written is something which is culturally formed in the home environment before children enter school and teachers need to recognise these literacy practices in the home in order to build upon them in the classroom to encourage new learning. As humans, we are diverse and there is not one, homogenous literacy culture to which we all belong. Children engage in a range of literacies in their homes and yet recent governments especially since the *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (Rose, 2006) are prescribing a one-method fits all approach to the teaching of reading.

Sociocultural approaches to learning stem from the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky (1978) and are based on the concept that human activities take place within cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems and are understood best when investigated in their historical development. Sociocultural theory draws upon sociology, psychology, anthropology and linguistics in order to examine

‘the relationship between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and cultural, historical and institutional setting, on the other’ (Wertsch, 1995:56). Thus sociocultural theory offers a way of identifying the learning processes and practices associated with literacy acquisition including reading and is perhaps especially important in today’s climate of ‘decontextualized and atomised skills’ (Street, 2012: vii). The sociocultural views on the teaching and learning of reading will therefore be discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

There are many different strands to sociocultural theory such as cultural psychology (Cole, 1999), distributed cognition (Rogoff, 1995), situated cognition (Kirshner and Whitson, 1997) and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Despite coming from different angles all these approaches have the common view that human action is mediated by language and other symbol systems within cultural contexts. Activities are viewed as social practices situated within communities with particular norms and values.

My own views on the teaching and learning of literacy, including that of reading, affiliate with sociocultural theory and its definitions of mediation, language and culture in learning. However, in relation to my research this theory also appeared to leave gaps and did not seem to account for the institutional, historical and cultural contexts in which the student teachers were placed. There also seemed to be a hiatus in the way it conceptualised the students within particular contexts. For sociocultural theory, individuals shape their identities as they become part of communities of practice and as such, it accounted for neither the shaping of identity in relation to the conflicting discourses that may be occurring in the communities, nor the role of power in the systems and structures within educational institutions. For my research, sociocultural

theory needed to account for the larger systems of power involved in shaping and being shaped by the student teachers, within the context of children learning to read.

The critical sociocultural theory as proposed by Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2012: xi) expanded sociocultural theory so that it has a ‘more critical bent and focuses on the central role of language and discourse in literacy events and practices’. They argue that the theoretical frameworks informing sociocultural research do not adequately address the issues of identity, agency and power in the production of knowledge about literacy (Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2012). Sociocultural theory is useful for understanding the relationship between culture and learning, but a more critical pedagogy is required for the relationship between power, ideology and schooling to be fully understood (Gutiérrez and Larson, 1994). Critical sociocultural theory thus provided me with a way of discussing the broader political and ideological issues emerging from my research.

The focus of my research being the student teachers’ beliefs and understanding of reading meant that the students’ learning was also a factor. Learning involves and requires participation – it is motivated by the need to understand something: an act, a word, a sensory experience (Kress, 2003). However, learning also draws from and constitutes ‘histories of participation’ (Rogers, 2002) and we bring our histories of participation to bear on each new act of participation in learning. Critical sociocultural theory situates learning within ‘discourse communities’ – groups of people who ‘share ways of knowing, thinking, believing, acting and communicating’ (Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2012: 16). However, people within these discourse communities are not always treated equally and some participants may have better access to the tools, resources and identities required for full participation. If this is the case, then access to a community’s discourses and learning within the discourse community is shaped by power relations.

1.4.1 Power

Within critical sociocultural theory ‘power’ is defined in the Foucauldian sense as ‘a field of relations that circulate in social networks rather than originating from some point of domination’ (Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2012:4). Foucault views both resistance and dominance as part of the same discourse relating to power, thus for critical sociocultural theory power does not just reside in macrostructures but is also produced by individuals as they are constituted in larger systems of power and as they participate within those systems. Power is “productive” – a result of interactions and relationships rather than something which is possessed by some and desired or resisted by others (Foucault 1980, 1984).

From this perspective of power and drawing upon the views of Piaget and Vygotsky, learning can be many things such as accumulating, assimilating and accommodating information, ideas and concepts together with the acquisition of ideas (Piaget, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Critical sociocultural theory would argue further that learning is also the resistance to or reconceptualization of knowledge and skills and that this may involve taking up and taking on existing discourses or disrupting fixed discourses (Lewis and Ketter, 2004), which has links to the constructs of identity.

1.4.2 Identity

Critical sociocultural theory views identity as fluid and as a socially and linguistically mediated construct and one that takes into account that individuals take different positions in dissimilar settings within social, economic and historical relations (Gee, 1999). Both Lave (1996) and Gee (2001) argued that learning can be conceptualised as shifts in identity – that we learn to adopt new identities as we engage in new forms of knowledge and participation. If this is the case, for the student teachers deep,

participatory learning would therefore involve not just the skills of the teaching of reading but how to think and act like a teacher of reading.

Lewis, Enciso and Moje refer to ‘agency’ as ‘the strategic making and remaking of selves within structures of power’ (2012: 4). Power enables degrees of agency that can resist structural constraints and can lead to transformative practices. For critical socioculturalists, agency does not stem from an internal state of mind but is a way of positioning ourselves in order to allow for new ways of being and new identities (Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2012). As we engage with different groupings of people or ‘discourse communities’, we represent identities that will be recognised in particular ways by those communities (Gee, 2001). Other aspects also shape how a person is recognised such as gender, age, ethnicity and social class and these features shape how people view themselves. The aim of my research was to take into account the cultural contexts of the student teachers but also to examine the relationships of power and identity as they developed as teachers of reading.

Critical sociocultural theory also demands that researchers reflexively examine their own position and its effects on learning and the production of knowledge. Not only do we need to understand the histories of the participants but also understand the role of our own autobiographies, history and participation. Closer attention to power relations in the research setting together with re-envisioning the roles of researcher and participant will have the opportunity to ‘move the production of knowledge about literacy in new directions, while calling attention to the complexities of understanding one another’s histories and interests’ (Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2012:4). The next section will therefore provide an overview of my own autobiography and history of participation in the teaching and learning of reading.

1.4.3 Role of the Researcher

I was the eldest of four children, came from a ‘working class’ background (my father worked at the local aircraft engineering company, my mother was a housewife) and as a child I can remember little about reading before the age of five. Evidently, I knew the alphabet fluently at three years old and I was read picture books with fairy tales being a particular favourite, as were nursery rhymes. My grandfather also spent time reading with me together with the telling of oral narratives, as he was a great teller of stories. I was able to read when I first started school and viewed the first level *Janet and John* book I was given with some disgust. My mother however was not aware that I could read – “I did not realise you were bright. I had no-one to compare you with”. I obviously kept my abilities to myself and I remind myself of my own son many years later. I progressed at a fast rate with my reading despite the fact that according to my mother, the school would not allow books to be taken home from school.

As I progressed through primary school, I became an avid reader but cannot recall actually reading at school. At home, I devoured books such as *What Katy Did*, *Heidi* and every *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* book by Enid Blyton. My father worked long hours and I cannot ever recall him reading with me. This is not to say he did not as I am sure that he did share books with us. However, he is not a great reader even today.

Progressing through junior school, I started to enjoy books such as *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little Women* and my favourite *Tom’s Midnight Garden*.

At grammar school, much of my reading was linked to my studies - *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Spire* by William Golding. I loved Agatha Christie detective novels and read so many that I could eventually always work out who the murderer was before the end. I went through various stages as a teenager too. These

included the horror book stage, the classics stage, and (perhaps rather embarrassingly), the *Mills and Boon* stage. My grandmother, showing how the sharing of texts can skip a generation, passed these romantic texts onto me. My grandparents were a strong influence in our family – they were both involved in and contributed to my upbringing, which may or may not be true of other families. Magazines were also part of my reading regime particularly *Jackie* and other similar publications, however I cannot recall reading newspapers.

My own two children, a son first and then a daughter, were born just eighteen months apart and were both introduced to books at a very early age. I was in the fortunate position of being able to stay at home, initially, with my children and so our days were spent playing, reading, visiting the park and so on. We were always reading and sharing books. Some of our favourites were books by the Ahlbergs, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Thomas the Tank Engine* and the *Alfie and Annie Rose* books by Shirley Hughes. We also read and enjoyed children's comics and watched children's films on video. The relationship I had with my children was one of enjoying and sharing, whether it was books, games, or outdoor experiences. Our reading together had as much to do with the wider qualities of our relationship and not just the technicalities of what we were reading. As a mother, I seemed to have a clear understanding of the holistic nature of children's learning rather than just the development of skills.

My son was the first to go to school, when he was five. He was able to read when he went to school but I was unaware at this time of how good he actually was. He maintains that he read purely by word recognition and once he had read a word, it would be remembered. He was always reading – anything he could place his hands on. The school gave him reading scheme books to read which he progressed through at a very fast rate until he became a 'free reader' when he was in Year 2. My daughter

however was a little more reluctant to read. She much preferred being read to and was much more able to tell stories orally. We read exciting real books together as well as the *Billy Blue Hat* reading scheme books from school. She did benefit from some phonics work although as with her brother, she relied heavily upon whole word recognition. It took a little while for her to pick up books by herself and it was not until she was read *The Wreck of the Zanzibar* by Michael Morpurgo during bedtime story times that she finally got 'hooked' into books. All the way through her primary and secondary years, she would try to read as little as possible. What she really disliked was the analysis of books at school and it was not until she was about sixteen that she really started to devour books, starting with the entire works of Jane Austen!

When my own children were aged seven and eight, I completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and started teaching in a primary school a year later. I was based in a school in a socio-economically deprived area of Kent, very similar to the schools the student teachers in my study were teaching in. I was always based in Key Stage Two and for most of my primary teaching career, I taught children in years five and six. Most of my teaching of reading therefore had a focus on comprehension and although there were some children who had difficulties decoding, they were removed from my classroom for specific intervention strategies.

One of the things I learnt whilst teaching children in this school was that children need different strategies for learning and that I needed to entice the children to develop a desire and passion to read. I attempted to do this, by providing a purpose for their reading, choosing texts carefully according to the interests of the class (one year I had twenty two boys and ten girls in the class), providing exciting activities to develop understanding of texts including drama and supported them in becoming 'detectives' as they worked on higher order skills such as inference and deduction. What I also learnt

from teaching these children was that they were coming into school with a vast range of experiences of reading in their own communities. They were able to read and understand any instructions relating to the computer games they were playing, they could read every word on their 'trump cards' or 'Pokémon cards' and could remember and sing lyrics to popular songs, word for word.

As a teacher, however, I was also constrained in my teaching practices due to government policies and shortly after starting my teaching career the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1988) was introduced by the school. I would adapt and use such documents to meet the needs of the children and often did not follow the prescribed ways of teaching. If I could see that it would not work for the children in my class then I would use other learning and teaching strategies. For me, it was my professional decision as a teacher, which needed to be followed.

As a university lecturer in Primary Education, I still tend to follow my professional judgements but also within the sometimes strict guidelines on our practice. Initial Teacher Education institutions are required to follow government policies including the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and as such are assessed on this by Ofsted. I am certainly not against the teaching of phonics, however my experience as a reader myself, a mother, a primary school teacher and now a lecturer, I know that one method of teaching reading is not enough to make our children readers. There are many theories, strategies and influences involved in learning to read and my next chapter will discuss many of these.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to learn about the student teachers' beliefs and understanding of reading, I needed to gain access to their categorisation system, their theories of the world of learning to read. In Freirean terms, I wanted to read their world before reading their words (Freire and Macedo, 1987). I thus sought to find out the students' conceptualisation of learning to read, what influenced their understanding of learning to read together with their developing world of a future teacher of reading.

In order to address this, my research questions were:

1. What factors influence student teachers' understanding of reading?
2. To what extent do sociocultural beliefs have an effect on student teachers' understanding of reading?
3. What is the relationship between student teachers' own identities and their approaches to the learning and teaching of reading?
4. What are the potential implications for Initial Teacher Education?

1.6 Outline of the Research Design

My research constituted a study in one Initial Teacher Education institution and the research sample was taken from undergraduate student teachers as they progressed through a three-year Primary Education degree programme with Qualified Teacher Status. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with five student teachers and observations of two students teaching reading in the classroom. An influence on my research methodology was that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which concerns itself with trying to understand how participants make

sense of their experiences. This approach is phenomenological in that it attempts to explore personal experience, is concerned with an individual's personal perceptions and also has a strong idiographic approach (Smith and Osborn, 2008). In my research study, the aim was to analyse data from particular student teachers in the specific area of the understanding of reading and thus appeared to align with the IPA approach. This is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.3.

1.7 Rationale of the Research and Contribution to Scholarship

The idea for my research study germinated after reading the report from the Teachers as Readers project by Cremin et al., (2009). Phase One of this research focused on 1200 primary school teachers, exploring their reading habits and preferences, investigated their knowledge of children's literature and the texts used in the classroom. Following this, Phase Two of the project aimed to widen teachers' knowledge and pedagogic practice and extend home-school relationships. The findings of this study were quite insightful but in particular a comment in the concluding section which stated that in order to support young readers deeper relationships needed to be conducted with families in the community and that the relationship between teachers', children's and parents' reading lives and practices deserved fuller exploration. This led me to contemplate whether such a focus needed to be engaged in earlier in teachers' careers and that these relationships need to be explored when they are student teachers. The first phase of Cremin's (ibid) study did gather some data from student teachers in five institutions, however this data was not used in the final report. My research study therefore contributes to the discussions on reading and communities by focusing on

student teachers' experiences, their understanding of reading and the possible effect of sociocultural beliefs.

There have been many studies on literacy and social practice and how this may relate to teaching (Hall, 2003; Street, 1995; Brice Heath, 1983; Marsh, 2003), and although Larson and Marsh (2005) do suggest some implications for Initial Teacher Education in their concluding chapter, the main focus of their study is on the implications of theoretical models for in-service teachers. My research study concentrates on student teachers and their understanding of theories relating to learning to read including that of social practice and the factors which may have influenced this. The findings of this study contributes to the field by including possible implications for Initial Teacher Education institutions and policy makers related to student teachers and their relationship with the communities and families of their placement schools, student identity and the teaching of reading.

It is acknowledged that Initial Teacher Education is a well-researched area of study; however, there appears to be little research conducted on critical sociocultural theory and student teachers' understanding of the learning of reading. Lewis et al. (2007) include examples of studies such as adult education, immigrant youth translators and interpreters and researchers themselves but not student teachers. My study incorporates aspects of critical sociocultural theory such as power, identity and agency and the influence this has on student teachers' understanding of reading, thus contributing to the discussions of the need for a wider conception of sociocultural theory.

Within my research study, reference is made to funds of knowledge and the work of Moll et al., (1992) and Gonzalez et al., (2005). Arguments arising from their studies are used as a theoretical lens in which to analyse some of the data collected from the student

teachers. The studies of Moll and Gonzalez concentrated on multicultural education, Mexican students in Arizona and their teachers in school, whilst I have used the concept of funds of knowledge to analyse some of the findings of student teachers working in the context of Kent, England. This study therefore contributes to the arguments associated with recognising the value of the knowledge families possess and the usage of this within the classroom to support children's reading.

With my research being interpretive in nature and investigating experiences, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis informed my research methodology. IPA has been used mostly in psychology to examine case studies upon subjects such as health and illness, sex and sexuality, psychological distress and life transitions. Whilst this approach has broadened to other areas of the social sciences, it has not been used to inform analysis of student teachers or aspects of learning to read. This study therefore also contributes to discussions of the use of IPA for educational research.

In summary, the aim of my study was to explore and interpret student teachers' experiences, knowledge and understanding of reading but also to incorporate aspects of critical sociocultural theory such as the wider power issues and student identity. My research findings thus contributes to knowledge in the field of teacher education in that it provides a more in depth understanding of the factors involved when student teachers are engaged in the learning and teaching of reading and has produced some useful knowledge and understanding in order to support the development of practice. With much current government policy addressing the issue of reading in the primary school it is timely to focus on the insights of the teachers of the future.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

Having introduced an overview of the research, this thesis continues by undertaking a literature review in Chapter 2. Following on from this, the methodology is explained in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the findings with Chapter 5 discussing and analysing the findings with reference to the work of others in this field. The summary, conclusions and recommendations follow in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The first two research questions for this research study centred on the factors influencing student teachers' understanding of reading with the second research question focusing specifically on the influence of sociocultural beliefs. This chapter will begin by briefly discussing the reading debate and the associated theories of learning to read. Following this, the chapter will review the literature relating to sociocultural beliefs, the perspective which emphasises the social and cultural context in which reading takes place. In line with the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1.5, the review will be structured around the themes of culture, power and identity. Much of the literature relating to sociocultural beliefs refers to 'literacy' rather than 'reading' as it is concerned with the wider context of literacy, of which reading is a part.

2.2. The Reading Debate

How we learn to read and reading development is an area which is continuously debated with many different views being expressed on how young children can be supported to become competent and confident readers. Over the past few decades there have been generally two schools of thought and opinion. One which focuses on reading as a predictive, meaning-making activity whereby children learn to read by learning whole words in a context and by drawing upon their previous experiences and understanding of those words in spoken language. The other view is that children learn to read by responding to a set of stimuli such as a system of symbol-to-sound correspondences.

Known as the psycholinguistic and cognitive psychological theories, this section will briefly discuss the underpinnings and differences of these two theories before commenting on how each could contribute to a more balanced approach to the teaching and learning of reading.

For children experiencing their primary schooling in the 1980s and 1990s the predominant theory relating to the teaching and learning of reading was that of the psycholinguistics or whole-language theorists. This interdisciplinary field of psychology and linguistics focused on language behaviour and viewed reading both as a natural process and as a constructive or problem-solving activity. These theories originate from the work of Noam Chomsky (1965) and his nativist views of language acquisition whereby he argued that children naturally acquire and use oral language without direct instruction and are therefore equipped with some form of cognitive device enabling them to make sense of the complex rules of language. Although this innate device for learning language has not been proven, there is no doubt that there is something unique about the human brain which enables oral language to be learnt without any formal teaching.

This nativist approach to oral language acquisition was applied to the written word by Kenneth Goodman and subsequently became influential on teachers' understanding of learning to read. Goodman observed reading behaviour, which led him to argue that learners construct meaning from a text in 'a psycholinguistic guessing game' (Goodman, 1967). He argued that the errors children make when they are reading or 'miscues' - as he called them, should be seen as providing information about the comprehension process the reader is going through rather than as mistakes which need to be rectified. He suggested that readers draw upon three cueing systems in order to make sense of written text – graphophonic, syntactic and semantic (Goodman, 1973). If

children are supported in using all of these cueing systems together with the use of picture clues, an understanding of the different text types and knowledge of the physical form of texts then they should be able to remember whole words or make a good attempt at reading unknown words by drawing upon their previous experiences.

The key message from psycholinguistic theories was that there was only one reading process and that all readers, whatever stage they were at in their reading, use the same process. They insisted that reading was a problem-solving process that consisted of meaning-making and advised teachers not to see reading as a linear process – that is, letter decoding, sounding out, word recognition and then text comprehension. However, children are very diverse in both their characters and in terms of the linguistic and emotional knowledge that they bring to the classroom where they are learning how to read. Thus, one process for all is perhaps not an effective approach.

The pedagogies that followed the psycholinguistic lines of enquiry included using texts rich in language and a focus on supporting the reader to understand the meaning and context of the text they were reading. In line with this, Meek (1988) emphasised the richness of the plots and language in children's literature, criticising the commercially produced reading schemes used by many schools. Texts used were to be based on natural language, predictable and meaningful for the child – real books rather than commercially produced reading schemes (Waterland, 1988). Whole stories were seen as better than sentences and sentences were seen as better than words (Holdaway, 1979). In the classroom, teachers were advised to provide activities in the classroom which would promote engagement, interpretation and meaning making. For example: shared reading experiences (Holdaway, 1979), sustained reading in the classroom (Campbell, 1990), reading stories or poems aloud to the class (Meek, 1988; Fox, 2001), literature response activities (Harste and Short, 1991) and literature circles (Calkins, 1986; Harste

and Short, 1991). All of these activities related to constructing meaning from and responding to literature, with reading viewed as a dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. Enjoyment of the reading experience was of key importance.

Sound-symbol correspondences were therefore not taught explicitly or systematically with phonics teaching being integrated into meaning-based reading and writing activities. This was because whole-language theorists considered this as going against giving children a purpose for their literacy activities and that it disempowered the learner. They argued further that learners were motivated to make sense of text and did not need to separate word identification and reading comprehension, which is in contrast to the current policies on reading development in English schools today.

Government policy in the 1990s and early 2000s acknowledged psycholinguistic principles, in particular the cueing systems advocated by Goodman, by introducing the ‘searchlights model’ of reading into the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). The NLS was introduced into primary schools in 1998 and although not statutory as per the National Curriculum, teachers and schools were strongly urged by national policy-makers to implement it. The ‘searchlights model’ was an approach to reading consisting of four strategies: phonics (sounds and spelling), knowledge of context, grammatical knowledge, word recognition (shape of word) and graphic knowledge.

This model, however, was not without its flaws. There was no indication of how the separate strategies linked together, there was an assumption that words would be recognised by their ‘shape’ without any processing of letters and phonics and word recognition/ graphic knowledge were separated suggesting that they were unconnected rather than being related processes. Most student teachers in England today would have followed the NLS as they progressed through their primary schooling. As such, they

would have been encouraged as children to draw upon their knowledge about the world around them, their knowledge about how the English language works together with visual and phonetic clues in order to read.

In more recent years, following Rose's (2006) report on early reading, the searchlights model has been replaced by prioritising systematic synthetic phonics, as previously discussed in Chapter 1 and the influence of the psycholinguistic theories has been replaced by cognitive psychological theories. This perspective on early reading pedagogy and development relates to the mental functions and motivation of children with skills of word recognition considered to be the foundation of reading. In contrast to the psycholinguistic view, cognitive psychological theories advocate that children progress through reading stages and that the reading process is different for beginner and experienced readers. Readers go through different stages which are characterised by the addition of more efficient ways of identifying words (Ehri, 1987). However, underlying the conflict between the two theoretical perspectives is that of a larger ideological issue – that of a struggle between what may be called the 'traditionalism' of the cognitivists and the 'progressivism' of the psycholinguistics. Traditionalists such as Stanovich (1992) advocate that literacy consists of discrete skills that need to be taught in isolation from language contexts whereas progressives such as Routman (1996) argue that early readers need to understand the meaning of the text and make connections with that meaning.

Cognitive psychological theories view the understanding of the alphabetic nature of written language as key and proponents attribute priority to the early learning of spelling-sound correspondences. Decoding and deciphering of words is seen to be of huge importance with emphasis given to texts that have some degree of controlled vocabulary in order to make the alphabetic system as explicit as possible. The key to

this decoding is a process Ehri termed connection forming. Connections are created that link the written form of words to their sounds and meanings and these connections are stored in the reader's word memory or lexicon. Stanovich (1992) also refers to 'connections' in his notion of constrained reasoning, arguing that comprehension of the text is limited by the outcome of lexical access. He emphasises that although word recognition is central to reading, the ultimate purpose is comprehension and that word recognition is a prerequisite to comprehension.

Following the increased understanding of the role of word recognition, there became a greater focus on phonological awareness in the reading process. This is perhaps one of the most significant developments in the understanding of the reading process in the past thirty years and particularly in recent years. Phonological awareness refers to the general awareness of sounds in speech as distinct from their meanings. Phonemes are the units of sound that are symbolised by the letters of the alphabet and an awareness of phonemes is important to understanding the alphabetic system and therefore to the learning of phonics and spelling. To be able to recognise words, children need to link the graphemes to a phoneme in a word and then remember them. The teaching of reading through phonics teaching emphasises the knowledge of the letter-sound correspondences and the ability to apply this knowledge to reading and spelling.

Elements of the cognitive psychological approach were evident in the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) with the skills, knowledge and understanding for reading (and writing) set out in a linear model whereby children were introduced to specific concepts at specific ages, thus assuming that children all progressed in a similar way. The National Literacy Strategy was also supplemented with additional guidance on the teaching of phonics, Progression in Phonics (DfES, 1999), whereby teachers were advised to teach phonics in seven sequential steps.

Arguments against the use of systematic synthetic phonics to teach reading are on-going, in particular that there is no reliable empirical evidence that this approach offers the majority of beginner readers the best route to becoming skilled readers (Wyse and Goswami, 2008). Wyse and Goswami (2008) also argue that more extensive research is required to warrant such universal use of a specific teaching method. In addition, there are problems associated with teaching children to read purely by phonics because the English language is not written in a consistently phonic way. Most of the single letters in the English alphabet are associated with more than one sound so learning to read just by decoding phonetically will not enable a child to read everything.

Despite these arguments, cognitive psychological perspectives lie at the heart of the current policy and practice on phonological teaching and learning. Systematic phonics programmes teach phonics explicitly by delineating a planned, sequential set of phonic elements and typically begin by teaching children relations between individual letters and pairs of letters (digraphs) and all 44 phonemes of the English language. The National Curriculum (2013) sets out two dimensions in its programmes of study to develop children's competence in reading: word recognition and comprehension. It emphasises the importance of developing skills in both of these aspects but that 'phonics should be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e. unskilled readers) when they start school' (DfE, 2013:15).

In this section, I have examined some of the main issues that have arisen in relation to recent debates about the theories of learning to read. My research study explored student teachers' experiences and understanding of learning to read and the extent to which these different perspectives have an influence on their understanding. The findings and subsequent discussion from my research also challenges any 'one method fits all'

approach to the teaching of reading. The next section therefore indicates literature which has identified a more balanced approach.

2.2.1 A Balanced Approach

The diametrically opposing views between the psycholinguistic and cognitive psychological approaches are perhaps not particularly helpful for teachers and student teachers trying to help children to learn to read. If we wish children to become competent, motivated readers into adulthood then we do have to consider the many varied activities relating to the written language. Rather than there being two diverse camps of thought and opinion, a more balanced approach towards the teaching of reading could be far more effective. Children would be supported to master the mechanics of reading and be able to decode and recognise the words on the page, but would also be supported in making sense of the meaning of the written text and be able to use this in their lives. As a result, classrooms would focus on decoding but would also have an environment full of different types of texts with the children being provided with rich experiences in their use.

In practice, teachers in the 1980s and 1990s, whilst promoting the imaginative aspects of reading, continued to use traditional methods of teaching early reading such as phonic knowledge, word recognition and the use of reading schemes (Hall, 2003). Few teachers believed that children would learn to read just from exposure to children's literature but also needed to be taught the mechanical skills of learning to read. More recently with the focus of learning to read being on the use of phonics and decoding, effective teachers are still using a balance of approaches in the classroom – systematic teaching of phonics, building upon semantic knowledge and combining knowledge of print with real reading for meaning (Hall and Harding, 2003). Studies of schools and

classrooms where children are taught to read most effectively such as that by Taylor and Pearson (2002) have shown that children learn to read more successfully with a more balanced approach to word recognition skills and comprehension. Teachers thus appear to hold the view that most children need a balance of the contextualisation of quality and meaningful texts and systematic skills instruction.

However, even with this balanced approach occurring in schools, the focus of learning to read continues to focus on individual skills. Reading is much more than this, as together with other aspects of literacy, it occurs within a context, within social relations and cultural institutions. When we read we do so in particular ways for particular purposes. A comprehensive understanding of reading thus also needs to consider the influences of familial and cultural communities within which the reading is situated. The following section will therefore discuss sociocultural views relating to reading.

2.3 Sociocultural Views

Whilst the psycholinguistic and cognitive lines of enquiry are very different in approach, what they do have in common is their emphasis on the child as an individual and the individual nature of gaining meaning from reading. These views appear to narrow the perspective of children's reading development and risks perpetuating social inequalities that arise from social and cultural diversity. The issues associated with how a child reads are far more complex than this and aspects of this wider context also need to be considered.

2.3.1 The Cultural Context.

In contrast to psycholinguistic and cognitive theories, a sociocultural perspective highlights the individual in relation to others and the social dimensions of learning with

literacy and reading being related to culture, context and authentic activities. Children's reading development is understood by exploring the cultural, social and historical contexts in which the children are situated. Literacy, of which reading is a part, is encountered in a particular context in the sense that it is undertaken by particular people, at a particular time and place and in particular ways for particular purposes. This perspective moves the emphasis from internal processes and the individual to one of relationships between individuals and to the social and cultural context in which the reading is taking place. Thus, learning is viewed as a cultural process (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990).

The view that literacy and learning to read is socially constructed is largely credited to the socio-constructivist theories of Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky proposed that all human activities take place in cultural contexts and are mediated by language and other symbol systems. His theories (1978) include: that learning can occur prior to development; that more knowledgeable others engage in social mediation to include others into cultural practices; and that all thought occurs initially in social interaction on the interpsychological plane and then moves gradually to the internal or intrapsychological plane as the child gains knowledge. All of these ideas provide a conception of learning which situates an individual within the concrete social context of learning and development (Moll, 1990). Applying this to reading, we thus learn to read by engaging in reading itself, with the support of a more knowledgeable other and for a specific purpose.

For Vygotsky, the mental functioning of an individual was more than just social interaction; it was also that the structures and processes could also be traced to an individual's interactions with others. This idea was extended further and refined by Wertsch (1991) in his exploration of the relationship between human action, culture,

institutions and situations and his development of a sociocultural approach to mental functioning. Wertsch proposed moving away from studying the mental functioning of the individual in isolation towards studying mental functioning that focuses on how individuals are culturally, historically and institutionally situated. Building upon Vygotsky's analysis of mediation, Wertsch used the notion of 'mediated action'. He argued that by focusing on the relationship between mediational means as they are used in social, cultural and institutional situations, a more meaningful understanding of mental processes will occur: 'mediated action is motivated in part by the recognition that humans play an active role in using and transforming cultural tools and their associated meaning systems', (Wertsch 1994: 204). Wertsch thus takes Vygotsky's analysis of mediation and its contribution to psychology further by also viewing the function of the cultural settings in which the psychological processes occur- 'the intent is to view human action and sociocultural setting as analytically distinct, yet inherently interrelated levels of analysis' (1994 : 203). It is not just that sociocultural settings can cause human action but also that human action may constitute sociocultural settings. Learning to read is therefore socially situated and is embedded in the social, cultural and historical contexts of the learner's existence and it is this context in which children and their teachers can construct opportunities for learning.

Sociocultural theory explains how individual mental functioning is related to the cultural context and on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities play in influencing learning and development. There are numerous definitions of the term 'culture'; however, it is Bruner's work on cultural psychology which clarifies what the term 'culture' means for the sociocultural view. For Bruner, culture embodies 'a set of values, skills and ways of life' (1996:3) and is the 'toolkit' for sense-making and communicating. An example of this 'toolkit' is the language used

in a particular culture including aspects such as knowledge, beliefs and values shared by the people within the culture. Bruner defines 'cultural psychology' as a system that describes how humans make sense of their world and emphasises the importance of understanding culture as a context in which values, and meanings are interpreted.

Bruner criticises what he calls the 'computational' view of the human mind, that is, that the mind sorts, stores and retrieves facts which is then viewed as learning. Instead, he proposes a cultural approach to the nature of the mind, advocating that mind could not exist without culture. So, although meanings are in the mind, they originate in the culture in which they are created – the mind is therefore constituted by culture and shaped by culture (1996). Culture is therefore about the way we make meaning and the way we attribute meaning to different settings and particular situations.

The meaningful participation in the social life of a group together with meaningful use of language is also discussed by Bruner and which he states involves an interpersonal, intersubjective, collaborative process of creating shared meaning. This he calls 'intersubjectivity' which describes the way reality is represented in symbolism which then shapes the mind as an individual makes meaning from particular events, settings and occasions. It is thus the shared understanding between people that emerges through processes of communication. For Bruner, learning and thinking are always situated in a context and the tool for accessing this is language. We bring our cultural experiences with the world to our interpretation of written language. Linking this to learning to read, not only do children need to be able to learn to use the symbol system in both reading and writing they also need to be aware that this symbol system has been constructed socially and historically. Reading involves how readers interact with the meaning in what they are reading and is linked to the context in which that reading is occurring. Even when reading a book alone, the learning is considered to be social.

Reading and learning to read are ultimately linked to the context in which it happens and a child's first experience of reading is usually that of others reading. It is through the experience of other people and attempts themselves at reading that a child learns what really counts as reading.

Cole and Engestrom's (1993) cultural historical approach to cognition and their exploration of 'distributed cognition' relates to Bruner's concept of inter-subjectivity and shared understanding. 'Distributed cognition' is the notion that cognition can be distributed among people through a mediated process. Cole and Engestrom (1993) argue that in a cognitive task such as learning to read, the cognitive processes are not an individual matter as they are distributed among the teacher, child and other cultural artefacts used in the activity. The organisation and the structuring of the social and material environment in the context of learning to read serves the purpose of regulating the reading act for the child before the child can autonomously regulate it for themselves. The teacher is the key in this mediated process bringing with them their cultural past, their interpretations of texts and organising the teaching and learning with in the classroom.

The cultural perspective of learning advocated by Bruner shifts the emphasis to a relational view of learning, one of individuals learning in relation to others and to the social and cultural context. Learning to read thus becomes a process in which knowledge and understanding is achieved by engagement in practices and participation in the act of reading within the social context. Research in cultural psychology has led to further discussion and analysis of this idea of participation particularly by those advocating sociocultural-historical theories. This theory views the child as being an active member of a changing community of learners in which knowledge both constructs and is constructed by cultural systems (Cole, 1996; Lee and Smagorinsky,

2000; Rogoff, 2003). This construction of knowledge is considered to be mutually constituted which occurs when humans interact to learn.

Sociocultural-historical theory emphasises a culturally focused analysis of life and rather than isolating culture, learning in the classroom is linked to children's learning outside of the classroom. According to Cole (1996), human thought processes are social in their origin and develop through the processes of cultural mediation, historical development and practical activity. Language and literacy are key aspects of cultural mediation as they use collaborative mediation to construct and communicate meaning. Children thus learn the meaning of written language in the context of culturally relevant situations (Lee 2001). Learning to read from this perspective is therefore a process whereby knowledge, understanding and meaning are constructed through active, meaningful participation in literate communities.

The concept of community is one which pervades sociocultural-historical theory and is one which has been expanded to mean the larger society as a community of practice or multiple communities of practice in which children are socialised on multiple levels. Returning to the ideas of Bruner, he made the point that while nothing is culture free, individuals are more than just reflections of their culture. The interaction between the individual and the culture gives rise to human thought having 'a communal cast' on the one hand and having an 'unpredictable richness' on the other (Bruner, 1996:14). The result of this is subjectivity which results in the need to share, negotiate and communicate our meaning to others in the community. As learners we become enculturated into a 'community of practice', that is a shared set of social practices and goals and shared patterns of behaviour and thinking by a group of people. Lave and Wenger define community of practice as a 'set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of

practice' (1991:98). If learning occurs through participation in social practices, we become motivated to become participants in that community of practice.

We can belong to multiple communities of practice simultaneously, in which we are socialised on multiple levels. This is not necessarily an easy concept to grasp and as such, Rogoff (1992) clarified the complexity of participating in multiple communities by thinking about participation as occurring in three mutually constituted planes: apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation. She argues that children take part in the activities of their community by engaging with other children, adults and in this process of participation become prepared for participation in later events. Her framework allows participation in different communities – as individuals on a personal plane and their histories of participating in related practices, on an interpersonal plane with social partners and on an institutional or broader cultural context in which individuals act. She advocated that classrooms needed to change in order to consider building communities of practice that reflected the ways we learn in 'real' circumstances'. Within this, learning to read is therefore a process of active meaningful engagement with a literate community of practice. It is more than learning the skills, it is a process in which knowledge, understanding and meaning are constructed by participating in a literate community with children learning to read by participating in the reading practices of their world.

Researchers such as Barton and Hamilton (1998) conducted explorations of literacy learning through ethnographic studies of situated literacies, that is, literacies in the context of their occurrence. Such studies were undertaken to try to understand literacy from the perspective of those within a particular community or culture. In addition, the work of Scribner and Cole in the late 1970s and early 1980s challenged traditional reading and writing pedagogies arguing instead that the correlation between literacy and

cognitive ability was inflated. Their study of the literacy of the Vai peoples in West Africa found that this community used multiple literacy practices to accomplish social and cultural purposes in everyday life and that literacy did not always link to cognitive ability (Scribner and Cole, 1981). Literacy was thus about producing and using particular literacies for particular social purposes. 'Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text' (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:3).

A key concept relevant to the view that literacy is a social practice is Street's (1995) notion of multiple literacies whereby he distinguishes between two models of conceptualising literacy – autonomous and ideological. The autonomous model stems from the assumption that literacy in itself, or autonomously will affect other social and cognitive practices. This model assumes literacy development has a single direction and is associated with progress, civilisation, individual liberty and social mobility. Thus, by introducing literacy to people who are considered to be 'illiterate', their cognitive skills would be enhanced and their prospects improved regardless of the underlying reasons for the 'illiteracy'. The autonomous model frames literacy as a set of technical, discrete skills which can be taught in similar ways, in different contexts. Children are thus taught in this way despite their differing needs and experiences. The problem with this approach is that the same conception of literacy is applied to different cultural groups despite that in practice; literacy varies from one culture to another and from one context to another.

In contrast, the ideological model is a more culturally sensitive view of literacy as it acknowledges that literacy varies between contexts. This model focuses on literacy as a social practice rather than as a technical skill, with literacy being viewed as shaped by social, cultural, economic and political contexts and ideological in that it always carries

particular meanings and is permeated with power (Street, 1995). Literacy 'is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being' (Street, 2003:77). Street (1995) argues that literacy is always a social practice thus teachers and their pupils interact in a social practice which affects the nature of the literacy being learned. According to Street, multiple literacies vary according to time and space but they are also 'contested in relations of power' (2003:77). Although these two models appear to contrast with each other this does not necessarily mean that they are in conflict with one another. Indeed, Larson and Marsh (2005) suggest that it is useful to consider the autonomous and ideological definitions of literacy not as two opposing views but as a continuum.

In the same way that there are considered to be many communities of practice, as discussed previously, sociocultural theorists would also argue that there are many different literacies. Underpinning the ideas of autonomous and ideological models of literacy is the notion that there are multiple literacies and Street distinguishes between literacy events and literacy practices. With literacy being loaded with ideological and policy presuppositions, this distinction enables clarity between the two differing concepts. Brice Heath (1982:93) defines a literacy event as 'occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies'. Brice Heath's (1983) ethnography of literacy in three communities in southern USA documents the different ways in which each of the communities used language and how each of the communities in her study used language and literacy for different purposes and audiences. Her study was consistent with that of Scribner and Cole (1981) with both finding that the communities used language and literacy for different purposes and different audiences.

Street (1995) developed this idea further by using the term ‘literacy practices’ which focuses more on the social and linguistic practices involved when reading and writing.

‘the concept of literacy practices is pitched at a higher level of abstraction and refers to both behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualizations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing’ (1995:2).

Literacy practices thus refer to a broader cultural conception of ways of engaging in reading and writing within cultural contexts. The relationship between literacy events and literacy practices is one of much debate, however Barton (1991) argues that both concepts need to be used. For Barton, literacy events are all the activities in which literacy has a role, whereas literacy practices are the ‘general cultural ways of utilising literacy that people draw upon in a literacy event’ (1991:5).

The discussions on multiple literacies, literacy practices and literacy events focused on the nature of literacy itself and what it meant to think of literacy as a social practice and was termed New Literacy Studies. New Literacy Studies as advocated by Gee (1996) and Street (1993) was an attempt to construct meaningful contexts for literacy learning from an understanding of everyday life. Larson and Marsh (2005) argue that this model helps us to understand that literacy learning does not just occur in formal or informal settings, in and outside of school, but also in everyday interactions. The implications of this for student teachers as they become teachers of reading are that they will perhaps need to develop an understanding of both their own reading practices and the practices of the community in which they are working.

‘New literacies’ also accounts for the way in which new technologies have impacted upon literacy in recent years and includes phrases such as ‘digital literacy’ (Glister, 1997), ‘media literacy’ (Buckingham, 2003) and ‘moving image literacy’ (Burn and Leach, 2004). All these terms include multiple ways of decoding and making meaning

using a range of modes of communication including print, still and moving images mediated by new technologies. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) suggest that these 'new literacies' can offer different ways of interacting with texts and the world they mediate, as well as new technical and semiotic possibilities. They continue their argument by contrasting 'author-centric', 'published' and 'individualised' old literacies with 'distributed', 'collaborative' and 'participatory' new literacies. This participatory nature emerging from these new literacies has led Jenkins et al. (2006) to argue that literacy needs to be redefined to reflect new patterns of communication and collaboration.

Marsh (2003) considered the connections and conflicts between home and school literacies in terms of texts, investigating how children negotiate shifts between predominantly print-based literacy practices in school and the digitally mediated literacy practices in their home lives. Similarly, Levy (2009) demonstrated how children may develop identities as readers and writers of digital texts at home which are incompatible with the readers and writers they have to be in school. For many children today popular culture is linked to their leisure activities and can provide significant texts in their reading. The term 'popular culture' can be defined as practices shared by large numbers of people and different in nature to 'high' culture (Jenks, 1993). There has been much recorded about the relationship between the use of popular culture and education in school. This includes studies on: popular cultural texts providing a bridge between 'official' and 'unofficial' texts in school (Dyson 1998); how popular culture can be motivational embedded in school literacy practices (Dyson 2000; Marsh 2000); how popular culture can provide a means of recognising children's cultural capital in the literacy curriculum (Dyson 2002; Marsh and Millard 2000); and children re-contextualising their knowledge of popular cultural texts when creating new texts in the classroom (Belton 2000). Popular culture is thus integral to children's engagement in

literacy practices and social practices outside of school, many of which are mediated by new technologies (Hagood, 2003).

Debates arguing that there should be a shift towards more participatory, digitally mediated approaches to learning have however been slow to be recognised in both national policy and schools. The current National Curriculum in England (DfE 2013) lacks reference to the value of digital texts, media, popular culture, visual literacy, multimodal texts and new technologies. Lockwood (2008) suggests that teachers today are unsure about using popular fiction in the classroom because they are ambivalent about handing critical power over to the children. Suggestions that challenges to dominant practices can occur when there is tension between Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field have been made by Marsh (2006). Her study of the attitudes, beliefs and experiences of pre-service teachers' use of popular culture in the classroom argued that they needed the opportunity to explore the relationship between structure and agency in order to challenge the traditional modes of the literacy curriculum. Similarly, Burnett (2011) argues that if progress is to be made in investigating and developing pedagogies which include new technologies, then greater consideration needs to be given to how teachers experience digital literacy practices across different domains of their lives. Thus, it could be the relationship between using new literacies and identity, which causes there to be a reluctance to use such texts in the classroom.

This section has outlined how sociocultural perspectives on the way in which we learn to read shifts the emphasis from an individual, internal process to one whereby knowledge, understanding and meaning is constructed through social interaction with others and participation in literate communities. My research study used the sociocultural theories as a basis from which to investigate the extent to which the student teachers' understanding of reading was influenced by such sociocultural beliefs.

In addition, in line with the conceptual framework outlined in section 1.5, the study extended the discussion by exploring the systems of power involved within the student teachers' understanding of how children learn to read. The following section will therefore discuss literature in the field of power and reading.

2.3.2 Reading and Power

Within sociocultural theories there are references to the role of power, for example the discussions of the dominant practices in the types of texts used in classrooms and Street (1995) who conceptualised literacy as an ideological practice implicated in power relations. However, sociocultural theorists have tended to focus on the practices of particular communities and not those of the more dominant school communities. Whilst local communities are valid areas to focus on, it has resulted in comments that the focus has been too heavily upon marginalised practices of diverse communities (Davidson 2010). For example, Moss (2000) suggests that while school literacies are not necessarily superior they are more socially powerful. Within the context of children learning to read there are much larger systems of power involved such as issues in the wider context, social class and the discourses within schools and classrooms.

As previously discussed, traditional approaches to the teaching of reading tend to conceptualise literacy as a set of discrete, sequential, hierarchical skills which can be taught in isolation with individual repetition of these skills being at the heart of the associated pedagogy. However, there are some children who do not acquire these skills at the same rate as other children and are thus identified as being inadequate in terms of their progress. If this occurs with a group of children sharing the same socioeconomic or cultural background, this can result in a deficit model in that the focus is upon the negative aspects rather than focusing on the experiences the children bring to the

classroom (Carrington and Luke, 2003). Traditional models of literacy also tend to be associated with the white middle class and as such, their norms become 'established as the desirable literacy experiences which all children should enjoy' (Larson and Marsh, 2005:5).

These narrow definitions of literacy and the resulting deficit model run the risk of contributing to inequity by devaluing non-dominant ways of using language, resulting in limiting some children's opportunity for learning how to read. In terms of reading it is not just about acquiring skills such as decoding but learning how to be like a reader in the context of the literacy demands of the school setting. Bernstein's (1974) concepts of 'classification' and 'frame' are useful to consider when discussing traditional approaches to literacy. Bernstein used the term 'classification' to describe the degree of boundary maintenance between subject matter, with strong classification suggesting clear boundaries between subjects. Whereas 'frame' refers to the pedagogical context in which knowledge is transmitted. Strong framing meaning that the content, organisation and delivery of what is to be transmitted is not in the control of either the teacher or the pupil (1974, 205-6). Bernstein argues that as a result of 'framing', children are socialised into not bringing out-of-school knowledge into school - 'Through such socialisation, the pupil soon learns what of the outside may be brought into the pedagogical frame' (1974: 215). However, if teachers have a clearer understanding of the literacies children bring to the classroom this may increase motivation and make the learning in school more pertinent to the children's everyday lives.

Classification and framing also suggests a model for analysing the way in which the education system favours some pedagogies and forms of literacy knowledge above others. The texts used for the teaching of literacy in the classroom are based upon those valued by the specific section of society who possess the cultural, economic and

symbolic capital in the field of education to enable them to exert their authority. These are then reflected in the compulsory curriculum documents (Larson and Marsh, 2005). Bernstein's concept of visible and invisible pedagogies also has relevance to traditional approaches to the teaching of literacy. Invisible pedagogy 'is realised through weak classification and weak frames. Visible pedagogies are realised through strong classification and strong frames' (Bernstein, 1977:511). Classrooms which represent a model of visible pedagogy would thus represent a more traditional approach with the teacher and the pupil having little autonomy over pedagogy and children's learning would be structured in an explicit manner. Classrooms utilising a model of invisible pedagogy would result in teachers having more control over pedagogy and the pupils having more power over their own learning.

Schools are powerful institutions resulting in their literacy practices also being accepted as powerful in contexts outside of school. Bourdieu (1973) argues that inequalities are caused by cultural reproduction which is evident in the educational system and other social institutions. In schools, it is the middle-class consciousness and capital which is favoured and which could then restrict those from other cultures who do not possess this 'cultural capital' from achieving success in school (Lambirth, 2007). This occurs not only in the curricular content of the subjects being taught but also in the 'hidden curriculum' which is defined as the language, values and attitudes located in, and which an individual acquires from the discourse of curricular subjects and all aspects of school life (Davison, 2011). 'Cultural capital' may therefore play a central role in societal power relations with Bourdieu stressing the power of the school as an institution in validating certain forms of 'cultural capital' while rejecting others (Bourdieu, 1986).

Bourdieu's approach is useful in analysing power in development and social change processes. Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created and constantly

re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure. The main way in which this happens is through what he calls ‘habitus’ or socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking. In other words, ideologies and practices that are a part of our everyday lives are absorbed and these become habitual, shaping our future choices. Habitus is created through a social, rather than individual process leading to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another, but that also shift in relation to specific contexts over time. Habitus also influences the ‘hidden curriculum’ in the classroom by shaping what is not taught as well as to what is taught.

As discussed in the previous section, advocates of New Literacy Studies propose that new literacies are used more frequently in the classroom. However, attempts at bringing home literacies into the school and using popular texts in the classroom is not always considered to be successful. Their use in a pedagogic setting could result in the texts themselves losing their appeal and impact when utilised for conceptual understanding. Additionally Moss (2001) argues that social class affects children’s views and that differences in the way they approach texts in school are not due to ‘cultural capital’ but are influenced by their notion of what the future holds in store for them. The focus in schools on hierarchical and sequential learning is often dismissed by ‘working class’ children because they consider that it will not enhance their future prospects.

Issues relating to social class appear to be of significance, despite it being seen to be ‘unfashionable’ to discuss social class and education in the twenty first century. There seems to be an assumption that it is now out-of-date to talk about such matters and ‘the debate has moved on; social class is an irrelevance’ (Davison, 2011: 243). However, perhaps it is not that social class is ‘irrelevant’ but fundamentally different in today’s context. Savage (2015) argues that social class is once again a powerful force in Britain but also that the social classes have been remade. With reference to Bourdieu, he

demonstrates how social classes have arisen from three kinds of capital: economic, cultural and social and it is by referring to these that we can better understand how economic inequality is associated with class divisions.

Today, class is less about occupation and the differences between the middle and working classes, instead we have moved more towards a hierarchical class order which differentiates between the top 'wealthy elite' and what Savage (2015) calls the 'precariat' or bottom (people with few resources). In between these two extremes are many other classes all with their own distinctive mixes of capitals resulting in the middle section being more complex and hazy. This definition of class by Savage (2015) is one which has been accepted by this research study but the literature still uses the terms 'working' and 'middle' class and as such references will still be made to these.

Children from the 'precariat' or lower class do learn to read, however there is much evidence which demonstrates how levels of economic prosperity and social class affects success and achievement in school (McCallum and Redhead 2000; Sylva et al. 2003; DfES 2004; Strand 2014). The New Labour government spanning the years 1994 to 2010 responded to the problem of these children's lower attainment in school by attempting to change parents' attitudes, aiming to eradicate class differences by reconstructing and transforming working class parents into middle class ones (Gewirtz, 2001). Practices that 'good' middle-class parents were assumed to do, such as encouraging their children to talk, read to them and take on educational outings were aimed at working class parents. Schools set homework for children which involved parents reading with them every day, booklets were produced on how parents could help their children to read which encouraged them to read to their children, hear their children read or encourage them to read themselves, for at least twenty minutes per day.

In Bourdieuan terms, the government was attempting to transmit appropriate forms of 'cultural capital' and the habitus of the middle class to the working class.

These re-socialisation policies however were based on assumptions about the working class communities. Assumptions such as, that working class parents do not value education, provide limited support with their children's learning and have deficient parenting skills. The policies were based upon and served to perpetuate a 'deficit' model of working class parents who were blamed for the under-attainment of their children (Gewirtz, 2001). Gregory and Williams (2000) sought to challenge some of these 'deficit' myths concerning the teaching and learning of reading in their study of urban, multicultural areas. Myths which equate economic poverty with poor literacy skills and poor school performance of lower class children as the result of a 'cognitive deficit' due to the child's upbringing and the language used in the home (DES,1967). Myths which equate success in early reading with a particular type of parenting (DES,1975). Parents in England are encouraged to read stories to their children on a regular basis in order to ensure early reading success and children who do not receive this are said to be more likely to find learning to read in school difficult.

This view of what constituted 'good' and 'poor' parenting continued throughout the 1980s and still continues today. Well's (1987) study claimed that listening to written stories at home had a strong correlation with early school success and that the absence of story reading in lower social class homes perpetuated disadvantage and failure. This view that young children need books has become a commonly accepted belief.

However, Gregory and Williams' (2000) study found that children were able to read successfully even though their parents did not participate in this practice and despite not having access to what is termed 'good' literature. Children were engaging in a

multiplicity of literacy practices which although were in contrast to the literacies in school, were considered to be a strength and not a weakness.

More recently, a DCSF document, 'The Extra Mile: How Schools Succeed in Raising Aspirations in Deprived Communities (2009) explained 'low expectations' as the most significant barrier to working class educational achievement. This document claimed that the main problem was a cultural barrier of low aspirations and scepticism about education. It continued by stating that this 'cultural barrier' is reinforced by the attitudes of the parents.

Research findings have suggested that there is a prevalence of deficit theorising and views among teachers (Gee, 1996). Views such as, that the under achievement of some groups of children are associated with perceived deficiencies relating to themselves, their families and their cultures (Gonzalez, 1995). These deficiencies include inadequate motivation, home literacy practices, English language and parental support by which low academic achievement is both accepted and expected. The anthropological concept of 'funds of knowledge' provides a conceptual framework within which to examine some of these deficit views.

The term funds of knowledge was originally coined by Wolf (1966) when it was used to define the resources and knowledge a family used to manage the household budget. This definition was then used by Velez-Ibanez (1988) in his ethnographic study of economically vulnerable Mexican communities. This study, in turn, inspired the work of education academics working in Arizona, USA such as Luis Moll and Norma Gonzalez. Moll et al. (1992:134) define funds of knowledge as 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing' and is based on the premise that

‘people are competent, have knowledge and their life experiences have given them that knowledge’ (Gonzalez et al. 2005: preface).

The funds of knowledge research studied the lives of working-class Mexican-American students and their families in Tucson, Arizona, and how these households used their funds of knowledge to manage difficult social and economic circumstances. It was particularly interested in how families developed social relationships to foster and exchange resources such as knowledge and skills in order to manage the challenges they faced in their lives. Within the communities, much of the teaching and learning was motivated by the children’s questions and interests and was acquired by the children rather than being imposed by the adult. ‘This totality of experiences, the cultural structuring of the households, whether related to work or play, whether they take place individually, with peers, or under the supervision of adults, helps constitute the funds of knowledge children bring to school’ (Moll et al., 1992:134). The funds of knowledge approach resonates with the work of Brice Heath (1983). Her study (outlined in Section 2.3i), highlighted the challenges for some of the students due to the unfamiliarity of the questioning techniques in school. When teachers drew upon the questioning styles in the students’ homes, a more culturally relevant practice was developed and the students’ success in school improved.

Moll et al. (ibid) came to the conclusion that pupils bring with them funds of knowledge from their homes and communities which can be used to develop learning in the classroom. However, many of the teachers he worked with did not live within or know the people in the community in which they were teaching and as a result it was possible for such teachers to hold normative ideas about the school’s community, such as making the assumption that in lower class communities, parents and pupils do not value education. These studies arrived at the conclusion that the teacher only knows the

children as pupils within the limited confines of the classroom and rarely draws upon the funds of knowledge of the child's experiences outside of the classroom context. The claim was that teachers should focus on supporting children to engage in meaningful activities rather than learning facts and by utilising the knowledge and skills of households and communities, classroom experiences would be of a higher quality (Moll et al., *ibid*). Moll's research led to the claim that teachers need to engage in research themselves and to learn about the children in order to study the knowledge in the households and communities and to draw upon this knowledge in order to develop a participatory pedagogy in their classrooms.

For Gonzalez et al. (2005) the term culture is a loaded one – with expectations of group norms and static ideas of how people view the world and behave in it. Thus, these academics purposely avoid references to ideas of culture. Instead, they focus on practice and the interculturality of households – the way in which households draw from multiple cultural systems as strategic resources. The concept of funds of knowledge was not meant to replace ideas of culture but it was considered to be more precise in its focus on social and economic activities. Funds of knowledge, therefore provides a conceptual framework for informing effective practice for children from a range of different communities. By centring on the principle that the best way to learn about the lives and backgrounds of the children is by focusing on the everyday activities of the communities, it was considered to be possible to engage with the individuals themselves rather than assumptions and stereotypes.

Writers such as Moje et al. (2004) view funds of knowledge as having wider sources of knowledge than that proposed originally by Moll. Moje et al. (*ibid*) suggest that there are four sources: family, community, popular culture and peer groups and Moll later acknowledged that there were other activities in other settings which could contribute to

funds of knowledge such as popular culture. As discussed in section 2.3.i, popular culture is a key element in children's literary and social practices outside of school. Despite this possible gap, the concept of funds of knowledge is a useful one to consider, for if the literacies of the community, home and school are used to build upon each other, clear connections can be made for the children and richer learning can occur. The funds of knowledge research focused on students in Arizona and their teachers in school. It will provide a useful theoretical concept when analysing the student teachers in my study, their understanding of reading and the nature of the literacy interactions and practices in the homes of the children they are teaching on their school practices.

Whilst there are many strands of sociocultural theory, all agree that human action is mediated by language within particular cultural contexts. Understanding literacy and reading as a social practice therefore also requires understanding of the role discourse plays in learning about literacy and reading. Discourse as defined by Foucault refers to 'ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them', (Weedon, 1987:108). For Foucault discourses are thus more than just ways of thinking and producing meaning and are linked to power relations. Ochs (1988:8) defines discourse as a 'set of norms, preferences, and expectations relating linguistic structures to context, which speaker-hearers draw on and modify in producing and interpreting language in context'. Whilst, Bakhtin (1981; 1986) defined discourse in the sense of a social language that understands the utterance to be representative of the voice/s reflected in and produced from an organised context such as a school.

Drawing upon the work of Bakhtin (1981), Wertsch (1991) extended his principles by exploring the concept of voice, that is ideas as they are communicated at particular moments in time by particular people. These appropriated voices could be of specific

speakers such as parents or may take the form of 'social languages' characteristic of a category of speakers such as a particular community. For Wertsch, speaking and thinking involves 'ventriloquating' through the voices of other socioculturally situated speakers. He also emphasises diversity of voices and the way speakers weave together the ideas and expressions of others. Both Bakhtin and Wertsch emphasise how any utterance takes place as a dialogue and this notion of dialogicality is at the heart of Wertsch's argument that the concept of voice emphasises that mental functioning originates in both social and communicative processes.

Wertsch's ideas of social languages, has implications for teachers and student teachers as they engage in the context of teaching reading in the classroom. In line with these arguments, they will engage in social languages themselves and bring to this their own beliefs and attitudes. It is thus important to reflect on what student teachers bring to the context as well as the impact of the context upon the students. Social languages are also influenced by identity as a person puts together their words (Krauss and Fussell, 1991). Examining the sense of identity within the social languages in which student teachers' operate will inform their understanding of reading.

From the above definitions, discourses are thus socially acceptable ways of thinking, doing or saying and institutionally defined with literacy discourses viewed as representative of a group who has texts, practices, ways of knowing and being in common together with collective purposes and ways of socialising new members such as teachers (Barton, 1994). Literacy discourses can be located within wider communicative and socio-political practices and there is a distinction between talk and discourse. Within this approach, Gee (1999) makes a distinction between what he calls little 'd' and big 'D', D/discourse. Discourse with a 'big D' represents 'socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and

interacting, in the “right” places and at the “right” times with the “right” objects’ (Gee, 1999: 34). It is a way of us acting in literacy practices such as talking, reading and writing so that we can take on a particular role that others will recognise. Discourse thus represents the various culturally organised ways in which we act within our worlds. The word ‘discourse’ with a little ‘d’, Gee referred to as language in use, connected stretches of language such as stories, conversations, reports and arguments. For Gee, Discourse is always greater than language and incorporates beliefs, values, ways of thinking, of behaving and of using language and displays social identities. Relating this specifically to learning to read, Gee (2001:17) states, that ‘learning to read a text of a given type in a given way...requires scaffolded socialisation into the groups and social practices that make a text of this type to be read in this way’.

The concept of D/discourse applies to classrooms in the everyday language used in interactions. Schools are discourse communities and are the site of ‘educational discourse’ (Mercer, 1995). The language, values, ways of being and membership of teachers and pupils, define and are defined by individuals’ engagement with Discourses. The ‘official discourse’ (Mercer, 1995) of any classroom will result from the teachers’ interaction in a ‘dialogue of educational discourses’ that will determine their position on teaching and learning (Arthur et al, 1997). Over the decades, there have been numerous studies into classroom discourse such as:

- how classroom discourse enables or constrains participation in learning and the identification of the Initiation-Response-Follow-up (IRF) pattern in classrooms (Mehan 1979; Sinclair and Coulthard 1992);
- Gutierrez’s (1993) three types of classroom discourse structures: recitation, responsive and responsive collaborative;

- the relationship between authentic discourses to learning (Nystrand 1997);
- how discourse analysis can provide key insights into literacies in use (Bloom et al, 2005)
- the ‘dialogic teaching’ advocated by Alexander (2017).

With so many different demands made of children as they are learning to read, teachers may have to employ a range of different communications and languages depending on the content of the learning which results in complexity and additional pressures on both the teachers and pupils.

Building upon the work of Foucault and his views on power and discourse and bearing in mind that as previously discussed education is a socially powerful institution, Street and Street (1991) argue that schools tend to support dominant literacy practices and these dominant practices can be seen as ‘part of whole discourse formations, institutionalised configurations of power and knowledge which are embodied in social relationships, (Street and Lefstein, 2007:146). Similarly, Alexander (2001) suggested that classroom discourse and practices are shaped by the wider relationships of culture and pedagogy. The origins and purposes of literacy in educational institutions is also not questioned because of a process Street (1995) calls the ‘pedagosisation of literacy’. If reading is reduced to just the teaching and learning of skills, then it becomes separate from the social context and becomes a substance taught through authority structures. Children in the classroom thus learn the D/iscourses (Gee 1996) they require in order to conform to the school practices and purposes and they themselves are not able to contribute to this process. Children learn the particular academic language they require in order to get by in the classroom and some children are able to bring their experiences of this language from their home backgrounds. However, other children are not able to

draw upon this academic language quite so easily although they may still have a very good command of their own vernacular language. This could have an impact upon learning to read, as these children will be able to decode aspects of their vernacular language but not the academic language they are likely to see in classroom texts.

The sociocultural definition of literacy links with ideas of literate identity. In Western cultures literacy instruction including reading takes place predominantly in school and as previously discussed pedagogy is significantly influenced by traditional cognitive models of discrete and sequential development of skills. However, the sociocultural view is that school is just one of the places where we learn literacy and that literacy involves much more than discrete skills and the systematic testing associated with these. The social practices of reading and writing also involves socialising people in the processes of using them. So in order to become proficient in them we need to participate in them as advocated in Vygotsky's (1986) work on socio-cognition and Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas of 'communities of practice'. Literacy learning and thus learning to read is more than learning the skills, it is also a sense of social belonging and literate identity, of where one is placed within the sociocultural context. 'Seeing identity not as an essence, but as a positioning, helps us to focus on the social construction of that positioning, on the politics of position' (Toohey 2000:8). The student teachers' understanding of reading may therefore have links to their own identity, thus literature relating to student teacher identity will be discussed in the next section.

2.3.3 Reading and Student Teacher Identity

Learning to read is a complex process and developing the skills and understanding in order to be able to teach reading is equally complex. We have to remember that student teachers are learning themselves as they approach the teaching of children. Student teachers enter teacher education with their own personal beliefs about teaching, their own self-image as a teacher, memories of themselves as pupils and experiences of their own teachers (Kagan, 1992). The identity of the student teacher could thus be a key factor influencing them as teachers of reading.

The concept of identity has various meanings and there is no agreed upon understanding of what constitutes identity and how it is shaped. Sociologists, anthropologists and social constructivists have argued that people's identities are shaped and reshaped by their environment, their understanding of the norms of that environment and how they view themselves in relation to those norms. It is a view therefore which maintains that outside influences help to formulate individuals' identities. For Gee (2000), identity is not just about how humans define themselves but how they are positioned and defined by those around them.

There is also a general agreement amongst researchers that identity is a dynamic, on-going process and that teacher identity is influenced by a range of external influences such as experiences in life (Flores and Day, 2006) and internal factors such as emotions (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Individuals can have multiple identities that shift depending on the context they are in and the goals they are trying to achieve, resulting in it becoming a fluid process that can be manipulated or altered. However, individuals also maintain core identities created by their prior histories and these provide a relatively stable framework from which new identities develop (Gee, 1991).

For Sachs (2005:15) teacher identity ‘stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of “how to be”, “how to act” and “how to understand” their work and their place in society’. Additionally, Sachs (2005) emphasises identity as being reciprocal in nature and as a negotiation between experiences and the meaning making of those experiences. For student teachers their identity as a teacher of reading could therefore be composed of the interactions between external and internal influences. These consist of interactions between personal identities, professional factors such as policies, theories, trends and situational factors such as the social identities associated within a school or classroom context (Day et al., 2006).

The concept of beliefs has become a popular subject for discussion in education due to it becoming increasingly accepted that beliefs and values play an important role in many aspects of teaching. However, teacher beliefs about teaching can be hard to define, have been much debated and research in this area has often been diverse in its approach (Pajares, 1992). Many debates in the literature have focused on the extent to which beliefs and knowledge are unique constructs (Murphy and Mason, 2006; Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2006). Some researchers such as Kagan (1990) assume that beliefs and knowledge are the same whereas others such as Fenstermacher (1994) advocate that there is a distinction between the two. Furthermore, research such as that by Dochy and Alexander (1995) have conceptualised beliefs and knowledge as constructs which overlap but also maintain unique properties, claiming that participants in their study viewed knowledge as being formally constructed through school or training whereas beliefs developed through more informal experiences. Additionally the relationship between beliefs and practice is also complex and can appear to be ‘dialectical rather than unilateral, in that practice does not always follow directly from beliefs; and,

sometimes, changes in belief may come after, or as a result of, change in practice' (Poulson et al., 2010). There is therefore complexity involved with definitions of belief and their relationship to knowledge and actions. For the purposes of this study, belief will be defined as by Borg, (2001: 186):

' ... a belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour'.

Student teachers' experiences are wide and varied as they enter the teaching profession and they respond in different ways to the demands and expectations of becoming a qualified teacher. They become active participants and not passive recipients as they negotiate strategies to develop their teaching knowledge, professional behaviour and skills (Mahlios et al., 2008). Studies have demonstrated that student teachers' beliefs are resilient and any strongly held ideas can significantly affect how much they internalise the content of their Initial Teacher Education (Britzman, 1991; Massengill-Shaw et al., 2005). According to Tillema (1998), student teachers enter teacher education 'with explicit as well as implicit conceptions about their prospective role as a teacher and can be very persistent in holding certain beliefs as valid' (Tillema, 1998:217). In addition, Nespor (1987) suggested that beliefs have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge and that beliefs draw their power from material associated with experience, previous episodes or events. These then become a template and inspiration for the student teacher's teaching practices.

This line of research also suggests that student teachers change their opinions in line with the preparation for teaching and teacher training programmes provided by Initial

Teacher Education institutions, although later studies suggest that beliefs are difficult to change because they lie well within a person's being (Richardson and Placier, 2001).

Despite differences of opinion, teachers' and student teachers' beliefs should be an important focus of educational enquiry as they can inform educational practice (Pajares, 1992). As Kagan (1992:85) concludes, 'the more one reads studies of teacher belief, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching'. Ultimately, the importance of student teachers' beliefs should not be dismissed when investigating their understanding about the teaching of reading.

A teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning, including that of reading, develop over a period of time – during the years as a pupil, a student teacher and as a qualified teacher (Siebrich de Vries et al., 2013). Theories of socialisation advocate that student teachers become participating members in the society of teachers through the process of their experiences as pupil, student and teacher (Zeichner and Gore, 1990). Teacher socialisation is defined as the 'process by which people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge - in short the culture – current in groups to which they are, or seek to become, a member' (Lacey, 1977:13). Becoming a professional teacher is an interactive, dynamic, and interpretive process as a student teacher makes meaning from the context of their Initial Teacher Education in university and the context of their actual practice in schools (Mahlios et al., 2008). Thus, the socialisation of student teachers involves functioning within the contours of the school. Evans (2010: 185) defines this occupational socialisation as 'the process by which the ideologies, technical competencies, and expected behaviours deemed necessary to perform an occupational role are transmitted to novice workers'. However, this may not be an easy process, for example Flores and Day (2006: 230) found that the identities of new teachers were 'destabilised by the negative school contexts and cultures in which

they worked'. Similarly, Long et al., (2012) expressed concerns, asking the question – why do novice teachers prefer to hide as they scramble to teach? Their findings were that most students are unsure of how to negotiate their identities as professionals, with many preferring to remain 'invisible' as learners. For some student teachers therefore the process of socialisation as a teacher can be more difficult than for others.

Prior experiences as pupils seem to play a role in mediating identities of teachers and, according to Lortie (1975), the socialisation of teachers occurs largely through the internalisation of teaching models experienced themselves as pupils in close contact with teachers. Returning into the school environment activates this modelling which then has a major influence on student teachers' conceptions of the role of the teacher (Bukor, 2015). Student teachers develop their professional identities by 'combining parts of their past, including their own experience in school and in teacher preparation, with pieces of their present', (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:1029).

The concept of 'agency' was highlighted in the discussion of the conceptual framework in Chapter 1. The student teacher's agency, that is their active contribution to shaping their practice, plays an important role in their development as teachers. Their own beliefs about how children learn, beliefs about teaching and beliefs about the purpose of education may all be part of this. Research by Biesta et al., (2015) suggests that beliefs play an important role in a teacher's practice and that these were often framed by a shared professional discourse. They also argue that there is an apparent disparity between teachers' individual beliefs and values and wider institutional discourses and cultures. Thus it is not just individual beliefs which shape agency but also the wider issues of education.

As student teachers enter the communities of their school placements, they may experience identity shifts as they are learning. This movement from the university community to the school community and the shift from the protected environment of university sessions into initial practice in schools could be unsettling for some student teachers. The introduction of new teaching situations challenges them to think not only as an experienced teacher, but also the notions they have so far developed about who they are as teachers (Smagorinsky et al., 2004).

The literature related to communities of practice suggests that participation in communities and the learning that takes place there can affect identity development (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As student teachers progress through their teacher education they study and teach within various different communities – their teacher education programme including their fellow students and university lecturers, the school and classroom communities of their teaching placements; and finally the school community of their initial teaching post. Related to the different community contexts and the student teachers' experience is the notion of belonging or their sense of their place within these different communities. Student teachers in programmes of teacher education begin to encounter the challenges of belonging and of finding their place in the profession (Danielewicz, 2001; Flores and Day, 2006). Not only are they dealing with a sense of belonging to the teaching profession but also to the various communities of their teaching placement schools.

The processes involved in student teachers' school-based learning were explored by Maynard (2001) using Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of 'learning as participation'. Internal and external pressures were identified as being involved as the students adopted 'appropriate' ways of thinking, talking and behaving which were adopted from the discourses of their teachers. However, Maynard (2001) also argues that despite the

pressures, students were reluctant to relinquish their ideals and perspectives and thus concludes that 'learning as participation' may not adequately represent the complex relationship between the students and the school's community of practice.

The ways in which student teachers' and newly qualified teachers' identities are shaped can be influenced by many factors. The longitudinal study of teachers' professional identities in the early years of teaching conducted by Flores and Day (2006) revealed an interplay between contextual, cultural and biographical factors which affected their participants' teaching practices. Their findings included that teachers' personal and professional histories, their Initial Teacher Education, school culture and leadership strongly influenced their professional identities in the early years of teaching and thus also on the types of teachers they became and their effectiveness. However, it is also acknowledged that this interplay may involve conflicting perspectives, beliefs and practices (Flores and Day, 2006). The first few years of teaching may be seen as a 'two-way struggle in which teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subjected to the powerful socializing forces of the school culture' (Day, 1999: 59).

Teacher identity can be deeply embedded in personal life experiences. Beliefs and interpretations can be rooted in their own family environment and this impacts upon their school experience, philosophies of teaching and teacher identity (Bukor, 2015). Tensions were identified by Flores and Day (2006) between pedagogical theories learnt at university, management of the complex and demanding reality of the classroom and the making of pedagogical decisions in order to teach children effectively. They refer to a gap between the 'ideals' as a student teacher and the 'real world' of teaching in school

as teachers and highlighted the powerful interaction between personal histories and the contextual influences of the workplace.

Underlying the views of student teachers is the knowledge base that they draw upon to support their actions in the classroom and links can be made between this knowledge and their values, beliefs and identities as learners. Clandinin (1986) explored teachers' knowledge, attempting to understand how it may inform a teacher's daily activities.

This research suggests that teachers possess images of practice which are derived from their past life experiences and it is these which guide their classroom practice. These images of practice could be external as well as internal.

In his discussion of cognitive and situated theories of learning, Greeno (1997) refers to the transferable 'generality of knowing'. He argues that learners do not just transfer knowledge gained in one context and apply it in another but that they develop patterns of participation that contribute to their identities as learners. Skills and concepts are developed by individual experiences but the real value of this development lies in the way it contributes to an individual's identity as they participate in broader situations. Greeno's (1997) ideas link to Bruner's (1996) views on meaning-making in a cultural context and 'ways of knowing'. Knowledge construction is explained as 'outside-in' – where external experiences allow learners to perceive relationships and make connections (Bruner, 1996). Knowledge can therefore be considered in terms of patterns, frameworks and/or constructions involving relationships rather than as separate objective entities resulting in connection-making being fundamental to learning (Twiselton, 2006).

Links can be made between connectionism as it applies to learning to read and the connections teachers need to be effective, for example Medwell et al (1998) found that

effective teachers of literacy connected learner, curriculum and context. Connectionism could therefore be very relevant to student teachers who are learning to teach children to read. They need to be able to connect their understanding with all the other types of knowledge needed to create an effective learning experience and be able to support children to do the same (Twiselton 2006). For the student teachers it is thus important to not just try to develop areas of knowledge but to develop their individual identities and they should not be expected to transfer their knowledge from one situation to another but to generate a ‘generality of knowing’ which they can use across a range of situations.

The national focus on raising achievement test scores in literacy has resulted in a prescriptive uniform curriculum (Moore, 2004). This results in teachers being faced with mandates to standardise literacy teaching and learning even though they may recognise that no single approach will succeed. Moore (2004) also has the view that education has historically focused on uniformity, where the choices and power lie in the system and not with the teacher or pupil. In this model, the teacher is a technician with the teaching focus being on providing instruction in order to produce uniform results. Pitfield and Obied (2010) also found that some student teachers had the confidence to look beyond the approaches advocated by statutory curriculum frameworks in order to develop their own view of what innovative practice means in the teaching of reading. However, Daly (2004) warns of the danger in inducting student teachers into ‘the performance machinery’ of teaching and assessment where they have no ownership over their own practice. The implications of this on our current student teachers could be far-reaching and thus it is imperative that student teachers understand the principles underpinning their practices.

Ideally, all teachers would bring enthusiasm and a love of reading to their classrooms. They would be competent readers who feel confident and successful in their own reading. However, positive attitudes, regular reading habits and satisfying recollections of early literacy experiences cannot be assumed qualities of all student teachers. Some student teachers may not choose to read as a past time or able to recollect positive literacy events from their own childhoods. Those who engage in personal reading could be more likely to choose appropriate reading in their classrooms and be better models of reading. If they have read widely, they may be able to elaborate on their own experiences in selecting texts for children in the classroom. On the other hand, student teachers who do not bring an enthusiasm for reading or engage in free choice reading on a regular basis may find it difficult to model a love of reading (Benevides and Peterson, 2010). Some student teachers may have the ability to read but a disinterest in personal reading and thus be termed as 'aliterate' (Applegate and Applegate, 2004). For these student teachers, reading is thus not an identity for them as it is for those who enjoy reading, but a role they engage in mainly for academic purposes.

2.3.4 Concluding comments:

There appears to be a distinct gulf between the current cognitive approaches to learning to read and sociocultural views. Cognitive psychological approaches to reading with their developmental methods appear to largely disregard cultural differences in learning. Cultural practices of the dominant group in society are considered the norm and the culturally diverse are often judged to be deficient (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003). This can result in school literacy tending to reflect the values of the dominant and powerful socio-economic group.

In contrast, sociocultural theories recognise various forms of literacy in order to make literacy equitable for all social groups. The sociocultural view is that cognitive reasoning works in conjunction with beliefs, values and habits of mind that form an individual's identity (Lee et al., 2003). However, perhaps, both of these different theoretical perspectives are too narrow on their own in order to be truly effective in supporting student teachers in their understanding of reading. Some recent research studies suggest that it is possible to combine the different theoretical approaches. The research by Compton-Lilly (2006) demonstrated how to incorporate a child's home literacy experiences into the classroom until they felt confident with the school literacy activities. The concept of cultural modelling promoted by Lee et al. (2003) advocated the use of family and community practices for school based activities whilst Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) found that the use of authentic texts with adult literacy learners increased their literacy skills and frequency of reading and in addition the children in the homes of these adult learners experienced an increase in early reading success. The ensuing hypothesis of Purcell-Gates et al. (ibid) is that cognitive development occurs within a sociocultural sphere of experience. The outcome of these studies would therefore suggest that it is both possible and advantageous to combine the different theoretical perspectives on reading. My research study aimed to investigate the student teachers' understanding of the different theoretical perspectives, together with their origin and potential implications.

Understanding how we learn to read includes many variables and there may be many factors affecting student teachers as they progress towards becoming teachers of reading. Internal factors include their life history, their own interests and experiences, their cultural contexts, their level of confidence and their own ideologies, values, beliefs and attitudes. External factors such as practices in schools, teachers they work with,

their peers and their university courses. It is these factors, which are investigated in this study to identify the student teachers' understanding of reading and the following chapter will explain the research methodology and data collection strategies used.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe and justify the research methodology, strategies and data collection techniques used in this study. It will restate the research aims, questions and purpose of the research. Justification of the research paradigm will be given and the challenges of working with student teachers will be explored. The research strategy will be discussed together with a discussion of the influence of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. It will clarify the sampling strategies and discuss the data-collection techniques employed.

3.2 Purpose and Paradigms

My research topic was an exploration into the impact of sociocultural background on student teachers' views and understanding of reading. The aim was to investigate varying factors and as such, its purpose was exploratory in nature. I also wanted to find out the beliefs and views of the student teachers on reading and what was underpinning these.

This was a small-scale, general qualitative education research project embedded in interpretive traditions of research. The interpretive paradigm is 'characterised by a concern for the individual' (Cohen et al., 2007:21), and tries to get inside the person and understand from within. With the exploration of the student teachers' individual and collective understandings being the aim of my research, the interpretive approach was

considered appropriate as it views people and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understanding as the primary data sources (Mason, 2002).

My research did not seek any objective reality, but was an attempt to understand the interpretations of the student teachers as they progressed through their Initial Teacher Education. As Blaikie (2000:115) states, ‘Interpretivists are concerned with understanding the social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities’. My study therefore wished to explore the subjective interpretations of the student teachers’ understanding of reading and as such, it looked for common patterns and themes. The intention was to explore and discuss rather than to generalise or generate theory. It sought an insight into a particular context, relating this to the theoretical perspectives of others working in the fields of social science research, in particular sociocultural theories.

3.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Being interpretive in nature, a key influence upon my research methodology was that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which concerns itself with trying to understand how participants make sense of their experiences. IPA is a qualitative research approach first used in psychology but which has now broadened to being utilised in human, health and social sciences.

The IPA approach is phenomenological in that it involves ‘detailed examination of the participant’s life-world; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event’ (Smith and Osborn, 2008: 53). IPA is interpretative in nature and is thus also informed by hermeneutics – the theory of interpretation. In addition, IPA has a strong idiographic approach - as Smith et al., (2009) explain, in the first instance idiography is concerned

with the particular in the sense of the detail of the analysis. Secondly, it seeks to understand how particular events, processes or relationships have been understood from the perspective of particular people in particular contexts. These three key areas of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography and how they relate to IPA will be discussed in turn.

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience, in particular our everyday experience. There are many different phenomenologists, each with different interests and emphases but for IPA the most influential is the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. For Husserl (1927), phenomenology involved the careful examination of human experience and how we should endeavour to focus on each particular thing in its own right. In order to examine everyday experience, Husserl advocated that it was essential to step outside of our 'natural attitude' in order to be able to examine the everyday experience and that in order to adopt a phenomenological attitude, reflection inwards of perceptions was required.

For IPA researchers the key ideas from Heidegger were firstly, that human beings can be conceived as being thrown into a world of objects, relationships and language and secondly, that this is always perspectival and in relation to something. Consequently, 'the interpretation of people's meaning-making activities is central to phenomenological inquiry' (Smith et al., 2009: 18). Both Heidegger (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) emphasised the situated and interpretative quality of our knowledge about the world. But whereas, Heidegger emphasised the 'worldliness' of our existence, Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggested that as humans we see ourselves as different from everything else in the world due to the holistic nature of our sense of self and our individual situated perspective on the world. For IPA researchers, Merleau-Ponty's view, 'that the body

shapes the fundamental character of our knowing about the world, is critical' (Smith et al., 2009: 19).

Sartre (1956), argues that human nature is about 'becoming rather than being' and thus the individual is free to choose and is responsible for their actions. However, he also advocated that these are complex issues and need to be viewed within the context of individual's lives, their biographical history and the social climate in which they are acting. Sartre reiterates Heidegger's emphasis on the worldliness of experience but also extends it by developing it in the context of personal and social relationships. For phenomenological researchers this is significant as experiences are conceived as being reliant upon relationships with other people.

IPA research attempts to understand people's relationships and their attempts to make meaning out of their experiences, it is therefore also interpretative in nature. The second major theoretical underpinning of IPA derives from hermeneutics – the theory of interpretation. The work of Heidegger (1962) continues to influence IPA in this area, particularly his case for hermeneutic phenomenology as an explicitly interpretative activity. The hermeneutic circle is concerned with the relationship between the part and the whole. To understand any parts we have to look at the whole and to understand the whole, we have to look at the parts. The 'whole' could be the researcher's biography, with the parts being their encounter with the participants in the research study. This circularity is an effective way of describing the processes of interpretation. Whilst qualitative analysis tends to be linear in its systematic approach, a key belief of IPA is that the process of analysis is also iterative. – 'we may move back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step, one after the other' (Smith et al., 2009: 28).

For Smith and Osborn (2008) IPA involves a ‘double hermeneutic’, or a two-stage interpretation, whereby the researcher makes sense of the participant, who is making sense of the issue of focus. The researcher accesses the participants’ experiences via the reports the participant makes which is then observed through the eyes of the researcher. IPA therefore combines an empathetic hermeneutics with a questioning hermeneutics (Smith and Osborn, 2008). The researcher is attempting to understand the research area from the participants’ point of view but also questioning and analysing in order to make sense of it.

Idiography, is concerned with the particular and is the third major influence upon IPA. For IPA, the particular informs the sense of detail and the thorough, systematic depth of analysis. Secondly, IPA focuses on how particular events, processes or relationships have been understood from the perspective of particular people in particular contexts. Consequently, IPA uses small, purposively selected samples and may use single case analyses. For IPA, one person can offer a personal and unique perspective on their relationship to, involvement in or understanding of the phenomena of interest. However, most IPA studies commence with a detailed examination of each case, moving on to an examination of the similarities and differences across the cases, producing accounts of the participants’ reflections upon a shared experience. Thus IPA is committed to an idiographic approach, ‘situating participants in their particular contexts, exploring their personal perspectives, and starting with a detailed examination of each case before moving to more general claims’ (Smith et al., 2009: 32).

3.4 My Research Study

My research constituted a study in one Initial Teacher Education institution and sought to explore in detail how the student teachers were making sense of their personal and

social world in relation to their understanding of reading. It was concerned with the students' own understanding of their experiences and the possible influence of sociocultural background on their views. It was therefore an exploration into the student teachers' personal experiences and their perceptions and accounts of reading events and an interpretation of the complexities of their social situations. With IPA focusing on personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience; IPA was a suitable approach to consider as I was trying to investigate how the student teachers as individuals were perceiving aspects of reading together with making sense of their personal and social world. By using IPA for this research study, data from student teachers was produced through which a contribution could be made to the IPA approach. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

IPA emphasises that the researcher takes an active role in the research process and this was my intention as I was attempting to get close to the student teachers' perspectives. However, this access was dependent upon and complicated by my own conceptions because they were required in order to make sense of the students' world through the process of interpretation. A two-stage interpretation or double hermeneutic was thus involved – the student teachers were trying to make sense of their own understanding of reading as I was trying to make sense of them making sense of their understandings. By trying to comprehend what it was like from the point of view of the student teachers my aim was to explore and interpret the complexities of their social situations, the key influences on their understanding of reading and the effects of their cultural background, which is consistent with the phenomenological origins of IPA.

Research questions in IPA are directed towards people's focus on their understandings of their experiences. Questions which ask about people's understandings, experiences, and sense-making activities and which are situated within specific contexts, which is

comparable with my own research questions. There is also a need to care about the outcome and willingness to reflect upon the findings and the consequences which was certainly true of my own interest in the research study.

IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes. My intention was to conduct a case-by-case analysis of the student teachers with the aim being to look in detail at perceptions and understandings of reading of this particular sample rather than make more general claims. This is an idiographic mode of inquiry and because it examines individual cases, it is possible to make specific statements about those individuals. To enable this, access is required to rich and detailed personal accounts. I wanted my research study to be holistic in nature as I sought to unravel the different influences on the student teachers and how they affected one another. The IPA approach thus enabled me to offer the opportunity to explain why these influences were having an effect.

An IPA approach however can result in scepticism about how far it is of value and how far it is reasonable to generalise from the findings. This also raises questions as to the purpose of educational research. Issues about generalisation relate to discussions on how far generalised knowledge from research contributes to policy and practice in education. Hargreaves' (1996) view was that policy and practice should be based on a 'what works' and a 'best practice' approach. However, generalised knowledge such as that used in the 'what works' approach can be very limited in the context of a teacher's everyday experience. It could be argued that if teachers are given prescribed actions by researchers and policy makers this could make them less effective and more likely to seriously hinder the teaching and learning process.

Atkinson (2000:323), takes an opposing view arguing that Hargreaves' beliefs do not 'take account of the complexity of the personal, social and cultural world in which

teachers and learners move, or of the thinking processes, both conscious and subconscious, that inform their pedagogy'. This is close to my own beliefs and as such, it is not the intention of my study to generalise but rather to understand the issues from this case in their complexity and entirety as well as in their context (Punch, 2009).

In summary, using the IPA approach has enabled my research to focus on a few instances allowing me to investigate the subtleties and intricacies of a complex social situation. It has enabled me to delve into the relationships and social processes affecting student teachers, as they become teachers of reading.

3.5 Working with Student Teachers and Children

A key component of the interpretive paradigm is the role of the researcher and the nature and quality of their interaction with the research participants. My own involvement with both Initial Teacher Education and the teaching of primary English meant that I could not be totally objective in the analysis of the data. Rather than being a constraint, this was viewed as a benefit as I was able to use my own understandings to help to interpret the expressed views and behaviour of the students. I was a participant in my research situation and understood it as an insider but also recognised my position and how this may have affected my interpretation.

My research project involved undergraduate students on the BA (Hons) Primary Education programme, from within my own institution. As such, it was necessary to consider the relationship between myself and the student teachers. Being both a tutor and researching students on my programme could potentially have raised some ethical issues. There needs to be reciprocity between the researcher and the participants, so that the researcher will not marginalize or disempower the participants, (Cresswell, 2009). It was important not to allow the perceived power associated with being a university tutor

result in the students feeling that they were being coerced into the project. Feminist researchers in particular have argued that researchers need to pay attention to issues of power and that this is a matter of ethics (Kelly and Suki, 2004). Some student teachers may feel obliged to take part in a study in order to ‘please the tutor’, and as such it was important to avoid exploiting the work situation for the purposes of the research. Ethical principles rest on the assumption that researchers have no privileged position that justifies them pursuing their interests at the expense of those they are studying (Denscombe, 2007).

Punch (2009: 45) discusses the issue of ‘positionality’ and highlights that all researchers, whatever the situation and project being undertaken will come from a certain position: - ‘Even the (supposedly) detached objective external researcher occupies a position with respect to the research’. There are strengths and weaknesses associated with either situation. Working within the institution may result in a better understanding but less objectivity whereas a researcher working from outside the institution may have greater objectivity and less understanding. As my intention was to be more subjective and less objective, the potential for issues such as bias was addressed at the planning stages of the research.

The issues of identity, power and positionality however deserve a little further discussion because they were also key areas of the actual research study. As discussed in the conceptual framework (Chapter 1.5) critical sociocultural theories focus on issues of identity, power and agency and were as such, aspects investigated with the student teachers. Positionality can affect the research process – and thus- ‘positions matter’ (Hart, 2001:1), because power relations are inherent in all research settings. As Foucault states (1998: 94) – ‘power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared...power is

exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations’.

Sometimes the relations between the researcher and the participant can result in unexpected ethical tensions as the research is being undertaken with the power relations becoming structured in unexpected ways. Power relations may also shift and change resulting in different aspects of identities becoming foregrounded at different times. It could also be argued that the participants control the interviews as they decide what to say and what not to say. This may alter the dynamics of the research and could potentially skew the data. To resolve this, the differences in roles, power and identity need to be constantly reworked and renegotiated in the process of doing research. However, it is this analysis of the identity of and the positionalities and power relationships between the researcher and the researched that is part of the process of being ethical and reflexive. Another factor to consider when questioning positions in research is the impact of the researcher’s identity-biography on the data that they collect, as personal biographical details can also influence data collection. This reaffirms the need for me to include aspects of my own autobiography and history of participation in the teaching and learning of reading (Chapter 1.5.3).

It was essential that the student teachers were able to volunteer and not feel that they had to participate. Their consent to take part in the research needed to be freely given with the opportunity to withdraw at any time. Cohen et al., (2007) suggest that there are four elements involved in informed consent: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. The student teachers were responsible, mature adults who were able to make decisions as long as they were given full and correct information about the research. Thus, detailed information was given about the nature of the research project, in order for them to make an informed decision. This included an explanation of the

research, descriptions of the potential risks and benefits, and clear instructions that they could withdraw from the research at any time. They were also assured that they could freely choose whether to take part in the research. A copy of this information has been included in Appendix C.

The nature of my research meant that aspects of the student teachers' personal lives and cultural background would be investigated. Social researchers should respect the rights and dignity of their participants, avoid any harm as a result of involvement in the research and conduct themselves with honesty and integrity (Denscombe, 2007).

Differences of gender, race and social class can be seen as dimensions of power, (Gillham, 2005) and investigating the cultural background of the students could and did involve discussion of social class issues, which in turn may have resulted in some intrusion in the interview situation and barriers to communication and understanding. Some of the questions may have been viewed as intrusive by the students so there was a need to be very clear that the information was necessary for the research.

In order to investigate the personal experiences of the students, personal information about their background also needed to be disclosed and this again could have been perceived as intrusive. It was important to make it very clear that this information was necessary for the research in a way that did not discourage participation. Questions asked at the planning stage involved whether the information was needed, how it was to be used and whether I would be happy myself if I was asked for this information. As a researcher it is important to consider in advance any likely consequences of participation and to take measures to avoid this.

Interviewing the student teachers could expose them to possible benefits in their own professional development. It was intended that this research would contribute to the

current debate on the teaching of reading and consideration of this by the participants had the potential to empower them during their three years on the Primary Education programme. Reflection upon their own subject knowledge and the different ways of teaching reading is something which is actively encouraged in the programmes' modules. The students' active collaboration in the development of their knowledge and understanding would provide opportunities for their increased learning throughout the research and could therefore be considered as a potential benefit.

In research, there is always the possibility of change occurring as a result of the findings of the study and this may force the researcher into making value judgements (Robson, 2002). The discussions of the approaches to the teaching of reading could result in value judgements and the students' self-reflections on the nature of reading may result in their own attitudes changing as a result of their participation in the research. Whilst any research will involve value judgements in the sense that choosing one topic over another will indicate values, it is more about avoiding making judgements during the analysis and interpretation of the research. If values and judgements are acknowledged as being involved in research then the research could be classed as being political. This is especially true in this research as the issue of reading is currently one of much political debate.

Although the focus of my research study was not to investigate children, during the observations of the student teachers' lessons in school, it was inevitable that I would interact and talk to the children in the classrooms. Thus, issues around observing minors in classrooms also needed to be considered. Working with children is generally regarded as ethically more sensitive as well as more complex; this is because children are frequently positioned as 'vulnerable' and relatively powerless due to their social status and positioning in society (Brooks et al. 2013).

Written permission was initially sought and granted by the head teachers, class teachers and teaching assistants as the observations were to take place in their classrooms, with the research project explained clearly to all those involved. In terms of children, the ethical issues are the same as with any participant. They are free to participate or not, should come to no harm through their participation and should be treated fairly and respectfully in the research process. When interpreting data, there could be some potential for the mis-representation of children's perceptions, values and behaviours by researchers. Thus, it could be that even where ethical preparations for access, participation and consent are carefully managed, differential power relations may still occur. However, as previously discussed, positionality is never fixed but shifts, resulting in researchers not always being situated in more powerful positions. As with the student teachers, children can also choose how they respond to questions. As such, I approached the children myself and explained why I was in their classroom and what I would be doing. The children were given a legitimate opportunity to say that they did not wish me to join their group. This was all by oral assent and there were no children who declined.

Ethical practice comes down to the professional integrity of the researcher and their ability to consider all aspects of the research process in order to reach an ethically acceptable position. It is important that ethical consideration takes place throughout the research and not just at the beginning. Following procedures does not necessarily mean that researchers' practices are automatically ethical (Seale, 2004). It is acknowledged that there are potential risks and benefits for the student teachers in this research but that the benefits outweigh the risks. By considering the relationship between the researcher and the participants, issues of power, the cultural integrity of the individual and the value of the research to all involved, an ethically acceptable position may be achieved. A full research ethics review was completed and approved for this study (Appendix D).

3.6 Research Questions

My research questions were devised to investigate the student teachers' understanding of the learning and teaching of reading and are as follows:

5. What factors influence student teachers' understanding of reading?
6. To what extent do sociocultural beliefs have an effect on student teachers' understanding of reading?
7. What is the relationship between student teachers' own identities and their approaches to the learning and teaching of reading?
8. What are the potential implications for Initial Teacher Education?

3.7 Sampling Strategies

My research sample was taken from undergraduate student teachers as they progressed through a three-year Primary Education degree programme with Qualified Teacher Status. The initial invitation to be involved in the research was extended to all 250 students in the cohort and forty-nine students identified that they were interested. From this sample, some students had to be discounted in accordance with ethical procedures as outlined in Appendix D. The remaining twenty-seven were contacted and of these, five students replied to say that they were willing to be involved and as such, they became the sample used for interviews and observations.

The interview sample was more of a deliberate sample and could therefore be viewed as 'purposive sampling' as it was conducted in a deliberate way with a particular purpose and focus in mind. Purposive sampling has links to theoretical sampling (Glaser and

Strauss, 1967) that is selecting a sample which has relevance to the research questions, the researcher's theoretical position and the developing argument. With IPA, samples are selected purposively because they need to provide insight into a particular experience. Participants are therefore selected on the basis that they can give access to the particular perspective on the focus of the study. In other words, they are representing a perspective rather than a population. The sample could also be classified as an opportunistic sample, as the five students taking part in the interviews were not selected according to a specific theoretical interest such as students from a particular background. IPA researchers usually try to find a fairly homogeneous sample, for whom the research question will be meaningful. This aids not only the interpretative aspect by looking at the ways in which the participants vary from one another but also the practical aspect – by choosing individuals who are in this particular situation and the ease with which can they be contacted.

It is acknowledged that this is a small sample. However, the aim of my research was not to use a large sample in order to make generalisations but to understand the personal and cultural issues of this case from a small number of students. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) advocate small sample sizes in qualitative research by arguing that this increases the researcher's opportunity of being more closely involved with their interviewees and thus generates fine-grained data. In addition, because IPA is an idiographic approach and concerned with understanding more complex phenomena in particular contexts, IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes. The aim is to write in detail about the perceptions and understandings of a small number of participants and make statements about the individuals involved rather than making more general claims. Smith et al., (2009), suggest that for professional doctorates a total of ten interviews using four

participants would be typical. For my own study, there were five student teachers and twelve interviews, although some were interviewed more than others.

Being a small-scale study the size of the research could be deemed a constraint as the insights generated would be less significant than a larger project working with more student teachers and Initial Teacher Education institutions. Although researching students in one institution is in some respects unique, the findings from my study may well be applicable to colleagues in other institutions, as teacher education in literacy teaching is conducted under relatively closely controlled conditions in England. The findings of this research will also stimulate discussions in their own right and may provide the starting point for new research in the future.

3.8 Setting the Context

3.8.1 The University

All participants in this research were undergraduate students studying at a university in the south-east of England. The Faculty of Education at this institution has a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate routes into teaching, with the undergraduate programmes offering the opportunity to gain an honours degree together with recommendation for qualified teacher status. The participants were following the BA (Hons) Primary Education route into teaching which has a duration of three years. The students followed various modules over the course of the programme including English and Professional Studies. An outline of the elements of the programme relevant to this research has been included in Appendix E.

The university was chosen for a number of reasons, some of which were practical and others related to the nature and purpose of the research. From a practical position, the

university was well known to me, as I am a member of the academic staff. The nature of the research being related to student teachers and their understanding of reading also meant that the university was an ideal location for investigating the research questions.

3.8.2 The Five Student Teachers

Abigail

Abigail grew up in West England and was the youngest of three children, having two older brothers. She started school in a Catholic Primary school but then omitted year 2 and went into year 3 in a private school, where she stayed until completing her A-Levels. She started a law degree but had to withdraw from the programme due to her mother being unwell. This resulted in a three-year gap when she went travelling and lived in Australia for eight months. She started the BA (Hons) Primary Education course in 2011. When Abigail started her law degree, she was a year younger than most of her peers although this did not concern her as she had always been around people who were older than she was. She found it more challenging being one of the older students when starting the Primary Education degree, as she had to support her younger peers in looking after themselves.

Katy

Katy has always lived on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent and currently lives with her mother. Until the age of sixteen, she lived with her father until he unfortunately passed away. Katy has three older brothers and a younger sister. Following her primary schooling in the local area, Katy went to a middle school and then a Grammar school for her A-Level studies. She had a gap year before starting university during which time

she had extra tuition to improve the grade of her A Level mathematics and she also had the opportunity to travel to Spain and Cuba.

Yvette

Yvette's family home is near Thorpe Park in Surrey. She has an older brother for whom she sometimes completes some part-time work. She was a keen netball player but had limited her playing in order to focus on becoming a teacher. Once she had qualified, she was not sure whether to return to Surrey or to remain in Kent. She commenced the BA (Hons) Primary Education programme in 2011.

Lucy

Lucy was born in South Africa and completed her schooling and first degree in architectural design in Cape Town. She started school at six years old which is the norm in South Africa, with children required to have had their sixth birthday before commencing formal education. She has an older brother and a younger sister. She moved to England in 2005 and worked as an architectural designer. When possibilities for employment ran out due to the global recession, she decided to pursue a teaching career in primary education. Lucy is classed as a mature student due to being many years older than the rest of her peers and has been diagnosed as severely dyslexic.

Rachel

Rachel is local to the Kent area and was a few years older than her peers at university, as she had worked as a teaching assistant before starting her studies at university. She has a younger sister and at the time of her first interview was learning Turkish in order to communicate with her boyfriend's family. Her mother is the Head Teacher of a primary school in Kent.

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected over a period of two years. The order of the data collection was: semi-structured interviews, observations of English lessons, and further semi-structured interviews.

3.9.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The use of interviews aided investigation into the factors I was exploring and meant that I could probe more deeply into the issues I was concerned with and with greater depth of understanding. The interviews helped to provide some answers to the first three research questions and were used in order to investigate the complex issue of the understanding of reading and to gain an insight into the student teachers' beliefs, opinions, feelings, and experiences of reading. The intention was to derive data in an interpretive manner and to read the interviews for what they meant (Mason, 2002). This follows the principle that the interview is a social, interpersonal encounter and not just a data collecting exercise (Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, interviews are a good way of 'assessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality' (Punch, 2009: 144). Although the intention was not for this research to be auto/biographical in nature, the content of the study and resulting interview questions inevitably resulted in the participants recalling some of their life histories of reading.

Semi-structured interviews were used as I had a clear set of issues which needed discussing and questions to be answered. However, I also needed to be flexible to enable the participants to develop their ideas, speak more widely on the issues, and elaborate on areas of particular interest. The participants and I were able to engage in a

dialogue whereby the initial questions could be modified in light of the students' responses and any interesting and important areas could be probed further (Smith and Osborn, 2008). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews thus seemed to be particularly useful as clarification could be requested at the time. The interviews were however more than a conversation. They involved a set of assumptions and understandings about the situation (Denscombe, 2007) with the participants being the focus and me as the facilitator.

Interviews took place face-to-face in an empty seminar room at the university except when interviewing after an observation of a lesson, when they took place in the classroom once the children had vacated it. The timing of the interviews varied from forty-five minutes to an hour. I had a brief but flexible list of questions for each interview enabling me to have some control over the proceedings whilst still enabling the participants' freedom to discuss aspects of importance to themselves. Some questions were relevant for all the student teachers but some questions were used in response to particular issues raised in previous interviews. The interview schedule for Abigail is included as an example in Appendix F.

The number of interviews varied for each student due to their academic workload and teaching commitments. Yvette, however, only attended one interview. She declined the invitation of a second interview although did give permission for the responses from the first interview to be used in the study. The reason for her not continuing is unclear but there could have been a number of explanations. The interview timetable is listed in Table 1 below:

| | Interview One | Interview Two | Interview Three | Interview Four |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|
| Abigail | Year 2: start of second school placement | Year 2: following second school placement | Year 3: prior to final school placement | Year 3: following observation of English lesson |
| Rachel | Year 2: start of second school placement | Year 3: prior to final school placement | Year 3: following observation of English lesson | |
| Lucy | Year 2: start of second school placement | Year 3: prior to final school placement | | |
| Katy | Year 2: start of second school placement | Year 3: prior to final school placement | | |
| Yvette | Year 2: start of second school placement | | | |

Table 2: Interview Timetable

3.9.2 Observation of Student Teachers' Teaching

As well as interviewing the student teachers, I also completed some observations of the student teachers' English lessons in order to experience and observe first-hand their approaches to reading in practice. This gave me the opportunity to see for myself what was taking place rather than just relying on the students' accounts. As Robson (2002) notes, what people do may differ from what they say they do and observation allows this to be checked. I had the opportunity to observe English lessons taught by Abigail and Rachel. Both students had identified that the lessons in question would involve some aspect of the teaching of reading. Rachel was teaching children in a Year 6 class

and the focus was analysing war poetry, whilst Abigail was teaching Year 2 pupils how to identify features in a play script.

Consistent with the tenets of interpretivism, the observations were unstructured in nature. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has primarily been applied to the interpretation of interview data, however Larkin and Griffiths (2009) used observations in their research on experiences of addiction and recovery, concluding that such methods of data collection were conducive for IPA studies. Immersing myself into the social situation of the classroom, I was able to develop an understanding of the student's teaching and children's learning. It entailed talking to the children, watching the teaching and learning, reading the student's lesson plan and making observation notes. During the observations I looked for evidence of sociocultural beliefs having an effect on the student teachers' understanding of reading in the classroom, the kinds of literacy practices and classroom discourses present, whether there was evidence of larger systems of power occurring and the relationships between the student teachers' identity and the teaching and learning of reading.

The intention was not to make judgements on the students but to use the observations as a starting point for discussions in the follow up interview and to look for common constructs and themes. Observation of their teaching followed by an interview provided a shared experience for both myself and the participants (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). The notes from these lesson observations have been included in Appendix G.

3.10 Data Analysis

The aim of any analysis is to attempt to find answers to the research questions. Analysis is the process which turns the data into information which has been read in terms of some theoretical framework (Brown and Dowling, 1998). As detailed in Chapter 1, my study aimed to interpret the data given by the participants within the critical sociocultural theoretical framework. Issues relating to culture, identity and power thus informed the data analysis. These included: the student teachers' cultural background and the effect of this on their understanding of reading, power relationships, shifts and/or adoption of new identities; and conflicting discourses regarding the learning and teaching of reading. My intention was not to analyse the discourses in the data in depth, but because learning is situated within discourse communities it was inevitable that some aspects of discourse would be analysed.

Being interpretive in nature, my research also aimed to explore how the participants made sense of their personal and social world and the meanings that the experiences of the learning of reading had for them. It involved an exploration of the student teachers' personal experiences and perceptions rather than attempting to produce an objective statement about the events (Smith and Osborn, 2008). However this was a two-way process – as the students were trying to make sense of their world, as the researcher was trying to 'make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world' (Smith and Osborn, 2008:53).

Although I had five participants for the interviews, I began by looking in detail at the transcripts for Abigail. This was because her case study seemed to encapsulate many of the themes that could emerge in the other cases. Abigail's transcripts were therefore looked at in detail first before moving onto the other students. This also followed the

idiographic approach to analysis, as discussed in Section 3.3, which begins with particular examples, working up to further categorisation and claims (Smith et al., 1995). The data were then read through repeatedly, comparing each element with other elements and then coded with names and colours to arrive at some common themes. The aim was to emerge with meanings that were being constructed by the participants and myself as the researcher (Thomas, 2013). Once themes had been identified, I looked at how the ideas were related to one another as per a network analysis, but in the form of a grid. A section of this grid has been included in Appendix H.

1. All the data (from interview transcripts and observation notes) were read several times.
2. An electronic copy was made of all the raw data and stored whilst another copy was made and used as a 'working file'.
3. The working files were read through again many times, with aspects thought to be important highlighted (coding). As this progressed any important recurring ideas were recorded on a grid and labelled as 'temporary constructs'.
4. Relevant sources and their location were added to the grid next to the 'temporary constructs'. Colour was used to identify quickly and easily the participants.
5. All the data including the 'temporary constructs' were read again and 'second order constructs' summarised important themes which were occurring. These were added to the grid. From these, themes were identified and consideration was made of how they might connect together.

Following the analysis of the data, the themes were translated into a narrative account. The table of themes was used as a basis for the account of the student teachers' responses and which took the form of a narrative argument interspersed with verbatim extracts from the transcripts. The following chapter contains this emergent thematic

analysis in the form of a ‘findings’ section and this is followed by a separate discussion chapter which links the analysis to academic literature in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

The factors influencing student teachers' understanding of reading

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected from the five student teachers – Abigail, Katy, Yvette, Rachel and Lucy. The results presented are qualitative in nature and provide a rich account of their understanding of reading. The interview transcripts and lesson observation notes were read and coded resulting in emerging themes of personal experiences of learning to read, beliefs about learning to read, understanding of the teaching of reading, policy factors and identity as a teacher of reading. These are presented as an interpretative narrative account and in keeping with the IPA approach a large proportion constitutes transcript extracts interspersed with analytic interpretations of the text (Smith et al., 2009: 109).

4.2 Personal Experiences

As with many adults, the student teachers had very little recollection of learning to read and Abigail's response was typical of this.

I don't actually remember learning to read. As far as I can remember, I've always been able to read - from a very young age I've always had books around. It's always been something that I've been able to do as far as I can remember.
(INT1.1:3)

What the students do remember, however, is the influence their families had upon them as they were learning to read. Abigail commented that her parents and brothers taught

her to read and when questioned during the first interview on how they did this, she felt that it was by reading and listening to stories together as a family.

I remember us all learning together, spellings and reading together just as a family.

(INT1.1:3)

Similarly, the other student teachers recalled the social engagement and sharing of literature with members of their family, together with the enjoyment of texts. Katy identified that she had learnt to read by a combination of reading with her Mum and Dad at home and reading in school. Reading for enjoyment and the sharing of literature was part of the family's way of life, resulting in Katy becoming an avid reader. Rachel's home life also had a strong ethos of reading with both her mother and father playing a key role in her early reading.

We'd read every night before we went to bed. And he's (her father) dyslexic so sometimes we would work out words together. So it was more of a bonding experience I guess than learning. Learning came after.

Yes we'd read together. She's (her mother) a teacher so she would bring books home from school and it was nice, I liked reading. (INT2.1:2)

Rachel took her explanation of how she learnt to read a little further by highlighting that she did not recall going through a 'process'. She compared her own experiences of learning to read with the strategies she had seen being employed in schools as the pupils proceed through the various stages of systematic phonics teaching. Rachel added further that for her, learning to read was an 'exploration', an immersion into texts which links comparably with the psycholinguistic principles of learning to read.

Mum says one day I just read something. There wasn't a process really it just fell together. I guess it was more exploration rather than sitting down and decoding things. (INT2.1:2)

These comments by Rachel give a valuable insight into both her experiences of learning to read herself and her understanding of how we learn to read. The social aspects of reading were of importance to this family as they engaged in reading together and, in the case of her father, as they collaborated together in order to read. However, Rachel did not view this reading time with her father as ‘learning’. With them both participating in this shared experience, there appears to be a link to the sociocultural position of readers understanding the meaning of what is being read and linking this to the context in which the reading is taking place.

All of the students’ own recollections of reading as a young child appear to affiliate with the psycholinguistic theories of learning to read. Shared reading experiences, stories being read aloud, re-telling of stories, and writing generated from stories were all given as examples from the students, which relate to responses to literature and the construction of meaning. Reading was viewed as a problem-solving exercise with a focus on meaning making from the texts being read and the importance of context was a significant factor. All the students were exposed to texts rich in language which enabled them to gain understanding and meaning as they were decoding. As such, they were engaging in whole stories rather than breaking the text into sentences and then words in order to decode (Holdaway, 1979).

As with Rachel, Yvette also included a specific reference to phonological skills in her response, identifying that she did not really remember learning to read with, ‘phonics and things’. Including her peers at university with which she had had similar discussions, she added,

We don’t remember learning all these different sounds and then reading books with them. (INT 5.1:1)

A possible reason as to why she does not remember learning to read in this way is because the teaching of reading in schools at that time did not focus upon the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics, which is the strategy the student teachers are currently observing and experiencing in schools. Having undertaken their primary schooling in the late 1990s and early 2000s the students, with the exception of Lucy, would have been taught in schools using the National Literacy Strategy and the Searchlights model of learning to read which was based upon Goodman's (1973) cueing systems. This included, for the students, a two-way interaction with the texts they were reading as they used their knowledge and understanding of the world around them to understand the context of their reading.

The students would have received some sort of instruction in phonic knowledge which would probably have been referred to at the time as 'sounding out' words in order to decode. The National Literacy Strategy did include the use of phonics for decoding in the form of the grapho-phonetic cueing strategy and the additional guidance *Progression in Phonics* (DfES 1999) was used in schools. Children, at the time, were also taught to recognise by sight 'high frequency words' which was recalled by Yvette when she identified that she had learnt to read through repetition and learning whole words. The teachers at the time generally included a balance of skills and strategies for decoding as well as meaning-based reading activities (Hall et al., 2010). However, the teaching of phonics was very different at this time compared to the teaching currently in schools. It was more likely to have been integrated and embedded within meaning-based reading and writing activities which could be the reason why the students are unable to recall it.

Yvette also recalled that her mother would read with her at home and that it was mainly poems and the same stories read repeatedly due to her particularly enjoying hearing her favourite stories over and over again. Her experiences here again link to reading as a

social practice – the sharing of the stories that were being read repeatedly exemplifies the child and her mother engaging in their own community of practice. For Yvette, her enjoyment of being read poems by her mother was because she could eventually learn them word for word and say them as her mother read them. Her implicit definition of reading identified here does not include that of decoding text but focuses on shared reading experiences, modelling, reading aloud and reading for enjoyment as advocated by the psycholinguistic theories. For this student teacher, there appears to be some disparity between how she learnt to read herself and the way she is observing and teaching reading herself in school. It seems, however from Yvette's comment, that student teachers at the institution in general are having similar discussions about this matter and are experiencing the same inconsistencies as Yvette.

Another example of how the social aspect was important to the students as they were learning to read was that of oral story-telling which played a key part in Abigail's childhood. Her parents would tell stories and sing songs and she engaged in storytelling as part of role playing with her brothers.

My brothers and I did a lot of imaginative play, just messing around and making up games and stories. (INT1.1:5)

Comparable to Rachel's experiences, Abigail and her family appear to have been involved in a 'community of practice' in the home as they shared similar patterns of behaviour, thinking practices, goals and social practices. Abigail also remembered enjoying reading in contrast to her friends - for her peers, according to Abigail, reading was something they had to do because they had to write in their reading review, whereas she was reading because she liked the stories.

I just liked the stories, the imagination, the ability to get away into a different life, a different world, different character and experience things you would never experience in your own life. (INT1.1:6)

In the above comment, Abigail is advocating reading for enjoyment. There are no references to the technical skills of reading and with her love and enjoyment of reading; she was part of a reading culture. A culture some of her peers, however, seemed not to be a part of. For some children, reading was something that had to be completed rather than something to be enjoyed, resulting in those children not being a part of this culture. Thus, the children in Abigail's school seemed to belong to different communities of practice depending on their desire to read.

For all the student teachers their enjoyment of reading as young children did not continue when they were beyond primary school. Although an avid reader as a younger child, Katy did not enjoy the reading undertaken at secondary school. Her reason for this was that she felt that she was forced to read when she genuinely enjoyed reading in her own time. Reading at secondary school was also not a pleasurable experience for Yvette for similar reasons. She felt that pupils at secondary school read because they had to and not because they were finding out for themselves and that there was insufficient focus on the pupils' own interests.

All I remember about secondary school is GCSE books and the poetry anthology. I hated that. We had time when we had to read in class and I would sit and pretend to read but not really get much done in the class. (INT5.1:3)

However, the reasons for her lack of engagement seem to go deeper than the choice of texts at secondary school and reflecting on why she had no interest in reading as an adolescent, she commented that apart from her mother reading to her, she had no other

role models to encourage her that reading was an enjoyable activity to partake in. As a result of this, the only reason for reading was to pass exams.

It's always been just for work or GCSEs and that sort of thing when we were doing course work for GCSEs. I guess that's how I see it. (INT5.1:3)

Similarly, as a child, Rachel enjoyed reading and read avidly but her time in secondary school affected this negatively with the amount of school-based reading required for exams.

It went down-hill a bit then and it was mostly reading for school and reading the text that we had to read for English Literature. But it picked up again when I was about 17 and I started to read for pleasure rather than just education. (INT2.1:3)

In her comment above, she has identified a difference between reading for school and reading for enjoyment - reading for school was in order to pass exams and thus deemed not to be reading for pleasure. Findings from some of the interviews would thus suggest that for many students, their interest in reading declined as teenagers during their secondary stage of schooling. For example, both Katy and Rachael were avid readers during their primary schooling years but this declined when they were adolescents, which is consistent with the findings of Topping (2010), Clark and Osborne (2008) and Clark and Douglas (2011). According to the student teachers, the reason for this decline was due to the lack of choice of texts, irrelevant texts, the lack of purpose and the reading being conducted in order to pass exams and assessments. Ultimately, reading for the students at this time was no longer associated with enjoyment and pleasure. However, perhaps the concerning matter is that some student teachers are entering their Initial Teacher Education with some recent negative views about reading and this may,

as claimed by Benevides and Peterson (2010), have an influence on how they model a love of reading to the children in the classroom.

The student teachers' reading habits as adults seemed to vary according to their experiences as children. As adults, Abigail, Rachel and Katy continue to read for pleasure around their university studies but this is not the case for Lucy and Yvette. As an adult and student teacher, Lucy rarely reads for pleasure and in her first interview, she identified two reasons for this. The first being that she has to focus on the academic reading for her university course but also because it would be such an effort to find something of interest to read. Her diagnosis of being severely dyslexic would almost certainly be having an impact.

Because I'm not submerged into that world of reading I don't know what's out there that I would potentially find interesting. If there was some spark, if I started reading it then I probably would - that gap between going out and finding a book and seeing if there was something that you wanted to read.
(INT4.1:7)

Yvette also has no desire to read for pleasure as an adult and only reads if she needs to locate information. It is only when she needs to read something in order to be informed that reading has value to her. When discussing the extent to which reading is linked to our cultural values, Yvette felt that it was of limited importance. For her it was more to do with who we are as people rather than cultural background. She acknowledged that although she is a non-reader, as an adult she still reads more than her father.

I don't think it's really to do with the culture of things because my Mum and my Dad come from the same background. My Mum will read and my Dad won't.
(INT5.1:8)

She reflected on why her father does not read and thought that it was possibly linked to the purposes of reading. She related this to her own experiences and identified that the only texts she reads as an adult are the academic books and articles she has to read for her university studies. Nevertheless, in spite of her view that the desire to read was not linked to cultural background she added:

I don't think he was ever brought up on it and he was one of the naughty ones at school. He's a much more practical person rather than academic so he never really needed to read. Even with things like instructions he would just do it himself and if it goes wrong, it goes wrong, he'd rather do it through actually physically doing something than reading about it and then doing it. (INT5.1:9)

When asked if her father being a non-reader may have had an influence on her own interest in reading – she replied;

Maybe. I've always thought well he's got away with it ... (INT5.1:9)

In summary, for both Lucy and Yvette their disinterest in reading as an adult seems to relate to their experiences of learning to read themselves or their experiences of reading in the home.

4.3 Beliefs about Learning to Read

Reading for enjoyment was considered by all the participants to be of key importance in their development as readers. They recalled the reading of 'real' books and whole stories which would have had rich plots and language rather than the reading scheme books which the schools would no doubt have also utilised. The importance of reading for enjoyment was particularly influential for Abigail, Rachel and Katy and was exemplified further by Abigail when she was asked what she thought learning to read actually meant. She replied,

Being able to get enjoyment from a book, a piece of writing. To actually want to read rather than doing it because you have to. Because somebody has said you have to go home and do this. If you can't inspire somebody to read then what's the point in teaching them how to? Yes, they will be able to decipher signs and symbols around the place but that's not really the point. (INT1.1:8)

This small definition of what learning to read means gives a valuable insight into this student's ideology of reading. Superficially, she is saying that learning to read equates to enjoyment and because it is something worthwhile. However when looking closer at her views, there seem to be links to a traditional view of reading which may be related to her own cultural upbringing. She says 'what's the point?' twice in this brief response. For her the point is perhaps to be able to read books and novels while being able to read environmental everyday print is not something which is valued. For Abigail popular culture did not have a part in supporting children's reading. Books were far more important for her as they stand the test of time and books from 50 years ago could be just as relevant to the child as can a more up to date text.

Abigail was prompted to reflect on what else children need in order to be able to read and she commented that 'obviously' they have to learn how to read but again refers to narrative fiction only. Abigail acknowledged that children need to know how to decode and comprehend what it is they are reading but there was no mention of children making connections between their lives and the texts they read or that they need to reflect critically (at a basic level) upon what they are reading. When reflecting on what children need to be able to read she also made no mention of basic needs such as the conventions for handling books and the knowledge that there are a range of types of texts which have different structures and uses of language. Thus, her understanding of the requirements of being able to read was quite superficial but perhaps understandable at this early stage of her teaching career.

Abigail also discussed whether there was a difference between how we read and how we learn to read, commenting that learning to read was related to the skills of reading whereas how we read was linked to enjoyment but also that one informed the other. This appears to be in contradiction to how she believed that she learnt to read herself.

I think learning to read informs how you read. Once you can read, once it's fluent then you're reading for either information or enjoyment. You're reading to find out the story or the information that you're looking for. You kind of get lost in the world. I think that really fluent readers, people who really enjoy reading are able to see what they're reading and not just the words on the page. I think when you're learning to read, you're so focused on the words on the page and maybe pictures. The process of learning to read for me is the process of being able to look at the words and see what they're describing. (INT1.3:3)

The discourse in this passage may have links to the discourse of the current model of reading in schools - the Simple View of Reading – as discussed in Chapter 1. In this model, learning to read means learning the skills of reading and the techniques of decoding which is then followed by comprehension and enjoyment. She identifies a fluent reader as being someone who enjoys reading, but of course, this is not always the case. There are clear links here to her views of reading as being book based but there also appears to be a movement from the identity of a student to a student teacher participating in the school based classroom.

A key factor, for Katy was an adult role model who could demonstrate to children that reading was a pleasurable activity. Katy elaborated upon this further in her third interview when she was asked what children need in order to be able to read:

I think they need to have a parent who likes reading because if you automatically don't like reading, or you see someone who influences you who doesn't like reading, or you don't see them reading at all you automatically think, oh ok, reading is just something we do at school so I think it's good to

have a parent at home who reads. I think they need to be read to outside of the classroom because I think if everything is done in the classroom it is seen as work but whereas reading isn't work it's a skill we use every day and it's something to be enjoyed so - in school I think (very long pause) I don't know. I guess they need to see the teacher enjoying reading books rather than right we need to do the reading today so it needs to be something that's seen as fun as an enjoyable activity. (INT3.1:5)

The importance of a key role model has been highlighted here both at home and in school. For Katy, both the teacher and parents have a responsibility in demonstrating that they enjoy reading rather than just teaching the skills. There are also indications that she perceives there being a divide between reading at home and reading at school which will be discussed further in section 4.5.

Yvette also considered that the support of an adult to encourage a child to read was important, as she herself wouldn't have naturally picked up a book to read without her mother's encouragement.

My memories of reading are really my Mum reading to me. I don't really remember sitting down and reading for myself on my own. (INT5.1:4/5)

However, her understanding of the meaning of learning to read was more of a contrast to that of Katy, relating more to the skills of decoding and then understanding what is written on the page:

The first thing is being able to see and be able to read the physical letters and then the understanding of what those letters are saying. Being able to comprehend what's on that page... I just see reading really as the words and being able to understand what has been written on that page.(INT5.1:4)

She related this back to her own reason for reading - to understand what is written in order to gain information. In terms of what children need in order to be able to read,

Yvette connected her responses to that of her own experiences. She felt that children need to have patience because as a child she used to get very frustrated when she was trying to read words that she did not know. She tackled this herself by using the illustrations and other cueing strategies to work out the words she was having difficulties with.

...it's learning the different techniques and not being expected to do the whole decoding and separating the words. It's about the whole sort of picture.

(INT5.1:4, 5)

Rachel's definition of learning to read, below, encapsulated aspects of the current model of reading - The Simple View of Reading. She appeared to be responding to the question, 'What do you think learning to read means?' in a way that she felt a student teacher should respond. Her identity as a student teacher here seems to relate to achieving well and giving correct responses.

Learning to make sense of symbols on a page. Learning to understand what someone else is trying to say to you through the words. (INT2.1:4)

Attempting to articulate how children learn to read proved to be a more complex task for Rachel and she considered her response for some while before answering. What she seemed to be finding difficult was not her ideas but the feeling that she needed to say the 'right thing'.

(A long sigh). Starting with the alphabet, so learning what the symbols sound like and then piecing that together. It's difficult isn't it? And then I guess you would move onto sounds so like ee and ay or o and u – you know all the vowel sounds and listening to people read it and making that connection. It's hard.

(INT2.1:4)

She gave a similar response to the question – “What do children need in order to be able to read?”, with her answer focusing mostly on the skills of reading in complete contrast

to her own experiences of learning to read. There was, however, a brief reference to the social aspects of reading and the importance of oral language before she reverted to skills and grammatical structures.

They need to know the alphabet to start with. They need to know how letters sound. I think they need to hear people talking and reading to them as well. As like a model, as an example. They need to have some... obviously at the beginning... a basic but some idea of grammar structures, full stops and pauses and things. (INT2.1:5)

However, her response to what she felt was the most important thing for children learning to read, again moved away from skills and focused on reading for enjoyment. This differed from her previous responses.

That it's enjoyable and it's not a chore. It's something that they want to do.
(INT2.1:5)

Throughout this part of the interview, her views were constantly changing from one which affiliated reading with the learning of skills to one of the social aspects of reading and enjoyment and back again. I queried with her why this might be and her response confirmed my suspicion that she was indeed trying to answer my questions in what she perceived to be a correct way.

Maybe because I want to give you a correct answer. (INT2.1:5)

Despite, the ethical considerations relating to the relationship between myself as a tutor and the students it was clear that there were still elements of 'power' at work in this interview. The student could have been viewing me as a more powerful figure and someone who may have a bearing on her progress on the programme rather than as a researcher. This response could therefore be demonstrating the pressures on student teachers to conform and the influence of both government policies and the university

requirements on their development as teachers of reading. However, perhaps some power also lay with the student as she decided which responses to make. Following a discussion on the need for her to tell me her own ideas and opinions rather than what she thought I wanted to hear, Rachel gave her own thoughts and views on learning to read, contrasting the way children are taught in classrooms today with her own experiences of learning to read..

I think if you took away phonics schemes – and just tried each letter like when I learnt to read. Go for each letter and try to blend them I think you can kind of learn to read as you're reading. But, obviously now children have a much different experience to how I learnt to read. With the blending and segmenting and all the different tricky words that I think it's quite different now. (INT2.2:5)

Rachel continued by saying that she found it difficult teaching children to read in a different way to how she learnt to read. Her solution to this problem was not to analyse how children learn to read but to become familiar with whatever phonics scheme the school was using.

Yes. Different terms – not saying 'magic e '. But trying not to say that so that they are not confused with what they learnt. I do find it quite tricky. But I guess you just have to brush up on subject knowledge. Just try to read through the schemes that they're working with to do the best that you can. (INT2.2:5)

However, as with Abigail and Katy she reinforced her own beliefs of the teaching of reading as one of enjoyment and engagement. In addition, she contended that there needs to be more emphasis on reading for enjoyment rather than reading to achieve well in the national tests.

4.4 Cultural Values

In her first interview, Rachel was asked if she felt a person's cultural background had a bearing on their ability and interest in reading. In her reply, she articulated that she

thought cultural background did have an influence and that different cultures have different attitudes towards reading, encompassing elements of the ‘deficit myths’ as discussed in Section 2.3.2. Rachel claimed that she did not particularly like using the word ‘class’, perhaps because it was considered to be ‘out-of-date’ in today’s society but she continued to use it in her responses.

...in some cultures it’s not as important as it may be. In gypsy cultures, for example it’s not deemed very necessary, particularly for women to be able to be a housewife, so yes I think it is different in different cultures. I think class – I don’t like that word- but class does come into it doesn’t it? (INT2.1:5/6)

Maybe working class children don’t have the same kind of exposure to reading as middle class children would. So maybe they wouldn’t have time to build up an interest before they need to be able to read. So I think that if you have that at home you have lots of books around you, you might develop more of an interest than – oh I’ve got to read because I’m at school. (INT2.1:6)

There are strong suggestions here that she believes that children from the lower classes in society do not receive the input from their home environment in order to become successful readers. She continued by giving examples from her experience of working in school.

Well working in ..., it was quite apparent a lot of the time that lots of children didn’t have books at home and if a book was taken home it might not come back for weeks because it was just left in the kitchen or left in the bedroom ... and I must say it is particularly boys that I noticed it with. I don’t know if that’s general or whether it was just the case in that particular school. (INT2.1:6)

Rachel’s view that many children living in areas of social deprivation had few books at home was a view also held by some of the other student teachers together with no indication that these children might be reading other types of texts in the home. At the start of Abigail’s second school placement, she also commented on social class issues;

in her view, expectations are different between ‘middle class’ and ‘working class’ parents in terms of the importance of reading.

I went to a private school and so most of the children there were reading because it was expected of them, that they would be able to read. Whereas, in some of the schools that I’ve been in, the expectation is not so high and the parental support is not there. They struggle more because it’s not so important to them to be able to read at a higher standard. (INT1.1:11)

Abigail’s view that the working class community does not value reading is consistent with the normative ideas about the school community proposed by Moll (2000). Abigail was placed into a school where she had no link with the community and is therefore making assumptions about what they value. She also does not consider that the nature of the literacy practices, including reading, may be different in the home to that of the school and that these could be used to build upon each other to improve children’s learning. Abigail’s views here could be seen as an example of the ‘deficit myth’ which equates success as an early reader with a particular type of parenting and the source of her misconception probably goes beyond local issues, stemming instead from broader policy discourses. Abigail linked the reasoning for lack of parental support, to the parents’ personal experiences. If the parents themselves did not enjoy reading, or did not see any reason for it, or got through life without being an avid reader then, according to Abigail, their children are not going to view reading as something that matters. She did not provide any evidence for this view but as her own perception as a student teacher was possibly based upon her own experiences as a young reader.

Thus for Abigail, the biggest influence on the teaching of reading was that of the family- if children’s families read, have books and value reading then the children will

read. If they do not have the drive to read and the expectation that they should be reading then they will not be interested in as she says ‘how to do it’.

I think you could get most children reading, if you have parental support. You can get most children enjoying reading if you have parental support. If you don't, if you don't have parents who are willing to spend time with reading stories to their children, then children are not going to see the value in it. I'm not getting any attention from doing this so what's the point. (INT1.1:16)

Her use of the word ‘attention’ suggests that she sees positive responses as being mediated through the reading. Again, this demonstrates normative ideas about the school community and the notion of funds of knowledge. However, her ideology here may also be coming from larger systems of power with links to Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital.

Yvette’s views were a little different to that of Rachel and Abigail, admitting that although a stereotypical view, people from working class backgrounds may feel that they have achieved in life despite not focusing on reading and thus their children would have similar views. Alternatively they may not be able to read well themselves and wish their children to be more confident readers, resulting in them being more encouraging about reading with their children. She commented that children from poorer backgrounds might not have access to resources to help them read at home but she still believed that there was no reason why these children would not be able to read as long as they were receiving support from an adult. So ultimately, for Yvette, it was less to do with class and more to do with the attitude of the parents.

I guess it's more the effort by the parents rather than their class and their mind set on how they want their child to be and whether they can be bothered to help their child read or not. (INT5.1:11)

The participants' views of reading in the working class community seem to be consistent with normative ideas and the notion of funds of knowledge. However, we have to remember that student teachers are often placed in schools where they have no knowledge of the local community.

4.5. Reading Practices

As noted in Section 4.2, Rachel identified different reading practices in school and in the home. For Katy, there were also some distinct differences between reading at home and reading at school. She disliked completing a reading diary at school every time she had finished reading a text. This school literacy activity was seen as a chore and not one of value. Her use of the term 'forced' highlights the strength of her lack of desire to engage with this school-based practice.

It was just a chore – I didn't really feel that I needed to fill it in. I knew that I was reading and I didn't feel the need to have to record it because I was in bed when I was reading and I didn't want to get out my homework. It wasn't part of homework for me it was just something I did because I enjoyed it rather than something being forced on me. Because I felt that it was forced on me I didn't want to complete a reading diary at all. (INT3.1:2)

Whether there is a difference between home and school literacy was discussed further with Katy, who continued to link school literacy with the skills of reading and home literacy with enjoyment however, she also felt that the two needed to come together.

I think both of them need to work together so school needs to overlap and show the enjoyment of reading and home needs to overlap with school to show that reading is a skill that we need to use in everyday life... (INT3.1:6)

In her interviews, Abigail demonstrated a traditional view of suitable texts for reading, 'the right thing' for her was fictional books and there was no acknowledgement that literacy and the texts we read has changed and continues to change as we move through

the 21st century. Rachel expressed similar opinions, equating reading with the reading of books. Furthermore, for Rachel, they also had to be paper-based books.

It's important to read, well I think it's important. It was always an important thing at home and I want children to know how nice it feels to be able to be able to read a book and finish it. (INT2.1:8)

The whole idea of reading has changed since I've been reading. It's different now but I want them to want to read. Everything's digital on iPads or Kindles and it's just not the same interest. (INT2.1:8)

Rachel's opinions demonstrate rather a narrow view of texts and although she felt that there was a place for popular culture in the teaching of reading in the classroom, it was only as an initial stimulus and for boys in particular.

I think it is important. I think maybe it's like a gateway for some boys that don't want to read. If you can get them interested in things like that then maybe they will move onto other things. I think it is important as a starting point but not as a be all and end all. (INT2.1:4)

The views of Abigail and Rachel were however not consistent across all the participants with Katy and Lucy valuing the use of film media, in particular, for the teaching of reading. On Katy's second placement in school in a Year 1 class, the children had been writing some stories about *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl. The teacher had not read the original text to the children but had used part of a film clip. Katy felt that the children had a good understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the character of James and that they had been 'reading' the film, as they would have read the text. Thus for Katy, the use of popular culture in the classroom had value.

I think when they're watching a film they're reading the characters' faces, they're reading the whole picture rather than just one small part. If you read just one word it wouldn't really tell you that much but if you read a book you get

the whole story and I think that's what they're reading from watching a film or part of a film they're able to read the whole picture rather than just one word.

(INT3.1:9)

As a child, Lucy preferred to watch television and films, as they were much quicker and easier for her to access than reading pages in a book. However, she also acknowledged the reading skills involved in utilising digital texts such as reading facial expressions and the reactions of the actors.

I think I find that easier to do to read people than to read pages in a book.

(INT4.1:6)

Lucy's experiences of using popular culture to support her own reading have had an influence on her perceptions of the use of popular culture in the primary classroom. She felt that it had a place in the teaching of reading in the primary years particularly because it enabled teachers to relate to children's interests. Lucy discussed a digital book scheme she had seen being used in school to test children's comprehension. Whilst thinking that this was an effective scheme whereby children could work at their own pace, she was also slightly sceptical of how long the children would be motivated once the novelty had worn off. Furthermore, she stated that she would be very comfortable using a digital text with the children in the classroom as long as she had a good grasp of the text herself beforehand.

Some of the student teachers therefore demonstrated a more 'traditional' view of suitable texts for reading and what counts as the 'right things' to read for them is books. Whereas all the participants acknowledged the use of popular culture, they did not all view it as having value in the teaching of reading because it did not equate with this more traditional view of literacy. What seems to determine this view is the students' own experiences of reading as a child and their own cultural background.

4.6 Classroom Experiences and Discourses

Rachel's first school placement was in a combined Year 1/Year 2 class, and in accordance with government policies on the teaching of reading, the children were taught systematic synthetic phonics every day.

They did lots and lots of phonics every day for half an hour. (INT2.1:6)

Rachel identified that all the children seemed to enjoy reading even though they were involved in this discrete phonics teaching and learning and that there was a 'reading culture' in the school and classroom. The children seemed to be engaging in a reading community of practice within the class, with reading for enjoyment being emphasised as well as the technical skills of reading.

But they all seemed to enjoy reading; they all liked having stories at the end of the day. They wanted to change their books when they had finished them. So there was a big reading culture. (INT2.1:6)

Rachel's second school placement was in a Year 2 class and her experience of the teaching of phonics in this setting was very different to that of her previous school. The timing of lessons, the teaching strategies, and the staff utilised for teaching were all in contrast.

It's not every day. It's three days a week and I've seen them do different activities. They did a phonics charade – one child would act out the word and the rest of the children would write the word on their individual white boards. They had another teacher coming in to do a phonics session with them. It's very different to how it was at the last school. (INT2.1:8)

We discussed what it was that the children were learning about reading in this second placement classroom and Rachel moved away from the skills of reading to that of reading for purposes and enjoyment.

That it has different forms, different purposes. That we can read for pleasure as well as reading to learn about different texts and audiences and things like that.
(INT2.2:2)

Being in a similar Key Stage, Rachel approached the teaching of reading based on her experiences of her first school placement. On this second practice, she was given a little more autonomy in the planning of the guided reading sessions and was using assessment to inform future guided reading lessons.

I've tried to use the same technique that I saw at ... where they used the book as part of the literacy - so we did Mr Wolf's Pancakes on Pancake Day, which was really nice. They do Guided reading but again there are big differences in the ability levels but it's quite nice being in control of planning the guided reading – because you can see that maybe that book was too difficult or too easy.
(INT2.1:7)

Rachel's third and final placement was in a very different school compared to her first two placements. She was placed in a Year 6 class in a small village school in an affluent area of Kent. Rachel commented that the 'background and home life' of the children was very different compared to her previous two schools. The Year 6 class consisted of nineteen children compared to thirty-two in her second placement school. Rachel considered that the reading ability of the children in this school was at a higher level, possibly due to the smaller classes and more opportunity to give the children individual support.

Whilst Rachel was on her final school placement, I had the opportunity to observe one of her English lessons which related to the teaching of reading. The focus of the lesson was reading war poetry with the learning objective being to analyse the application of poetry techniques. Children were asked to focus in particular on the content of the

poems, the poetic tools being used, emotive language and their personal response to the poems. Notes from this lesson observation have been included in Appendix G.

Rachel used questioning throughout the lesson as a means of encouraging the children to search for meanings in the poems. There was evidence of closed questions, in particular when the focus was upon skills of following set patterns of referring to prior learning (1 and 39). On both these occasions, the children did not respond to the initial question resulting in Rachel changing her strategy. On the first occasion, she encouraged the children to discuss the question in pairs allowing peer-to-peer collaborative discussions to take place. On the second occasion, she changed the question to one which was more open and which gave the children clearer prompts to support their answers. The student teacher also asked questions relating to how the poem might make the reader feel (25-32), which generated some rather literal responses relating to the content of the poem rather than emotive ones. The children's responses linked to the content of the poem rather than that of feelings and whilst giving the children the chance for some collaborative discussion, Rachel did not take the opportunity of inviting the children to justify their answers or explain why they had chosen to respond in the way that they did (29-32).

However, on other occasions Rachel did invite the children to give some explanation with terms such as 'Why do you think...?' (47 and 55). This encouraged the children to speculate on possibilities and when asked why the poet had used certain words in the poem, invited them to consider authorial choice. In this section of the lesson, the children were able to make meaningful connections between their experiences at home and school (52). Rachel discussed with the children the last two lines of the poem *Dulce et decorum est, Pro patria mori*, asking them what language they thought this might be. After an initial suggestion of Spanish, another child suggested Latin. He justified his

response by referring to lines read in a *Harry Potter* book and thus appeared to be using knowledge of other texts to aid understanding of the poem.

The discourses in the lesson appeared to change slightly when the focus moved from more skills based interactions to that of more comprehension interactions. For example, there were examples of Initiate, Response and Follow-up exchanges (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992) when the children were asked to recall prior learning (4-6 and 41-45).

The more closed pattern of discourse could have been because they were more skills based questions. In contrast, there was some collaborative enquiry through dialogue between the children and student teacher when they were considering the use of powerful words (33-37). Cognitive strategies appeared to be made more explicit in this particular section of the lesson. The children were also drawn into a discovery of inquiry via the student teacher's modelling - both in her modelling of the reading of the poem and in the way she was making sense of the text itself. The world of possibilities was introduced to the children when she explained her own interpretation of the meaning of the poem (58+) and Rachel positioned herself and the children as being joint enquirers into the meaning of the text. What was perhaps missing was an extension of this by asking the children for more alternative readings and their own views of the meaning (57).

Following the whole class interaction at the beginning of the lesson, the children were given the opportunity to engage in and analyse a variety of different war poems from different wars. The children worked in collaborative groups and their own lines of enquiry were encouraged. The learners were given the opportunity to discuss the various poems in order to gain a shared understanding and meaning and the collaborative nature of the task enabled joint enquiry resulting in comprehension development. The investigatory nature of the lesson enabled the children to read new

texts and discuss their understanding and use of poetic devices. There were some rich conversations and the children engaged in much collaborative talk about words and vocabulary, the poets' choice and use of language and the effect of this upon the reader. The task was followed by discussion of the use of powerful words in the poem with some good suggestions being offered by the children such as 'froth-corrupted lungs' and 'drowning in gas'. The use of language in some of these poems was challenging and in terms of developing their reading, the children learnt not just how poetic devices were used but also new vocabulary such as 'triage', 'orisons' and 'pallor'.

Following the lesson Rachel clarified that she had chosen the poems by referring to her own previous experience of studying war poetry and she had chosen a range in order to give the children breadth of understanding.

I looked through some of my A Level notes from my A Level war poetry and I started off just doing world war one and then I found that 'Sister' one and I really wanted to include it so I changed the whole idea and did the Vietnam war and two from world war one and one from the Afghanistan war. Just because I've always said to them that I want to give them a well-rounded perspective on things and not just a one sided view. (INT2.3:1)

The lesson was part of a series of lessons intended to develop the children's reading skills both in relation to comprehension and to further their decoding of more complex and challenging words. Rachel commented that her lesson helped to develop the children's reading by investigating a range of poems and by analysing the application of techniques.

I hope that now they're aware of the different poetry techniques and because yesterday we looked just at the techniques I hope they can see how they can be applied and obviously I hope they remember the variety of stuff that we've read

and not just the world war one stuff that also how the same topic can be written about in different ways. (INT2.3:1/2)

In terms of her impact on the reading abilities of these children while she was working with them on placement, it was about giving the children a variety of experiences and using her own learning in university sessions to extend the children's learning.

I think I might have exposed them to different things only because of the different things we've done at university... So maybe they've been exposed to different things. Maybe that's because of the things we do at university but I'm new so I try out different things. (INT2.3:2)

Abigail's first school placement was also in Key Stage 1 and when asked to discuss the activities she engaged in for the teaching of reading, she referred to strategies such as guided reading, phonics and story time at the end of the day. She also used the opportunity in school to tell stories to the children, relating her practise in school to her own culture of reading at home and the social aspects of reading. With her own background including oral storytelling, for Abigail it was important to tell children stories and not just to read stories so that,

...they realise that they can make up their own stories and also sometimes reading can be hard but anybody can tell a story and anyone can have the imagination to make it up and if you have an oral story, somebody who struggles to read can still participate and join in with it and also if they are learning to tell their own stories then that might inspire them and encourage them to read other stories for themselves. (INT1.1:10)

Abigail completed her second school placement in a Year 5 class in a primary school located in an economically deprived area of Kent. At the start of the placement, she was asked how she was going to approach the teaching of reading. She was unable to really articulate how she was going to do this although spoke at length about the text being

read to the children – *Journey to the River Sea* by Eva Ibbotson. She did however explain the importance of engaging the children when reading a book aloud.

It's almost as if you've got to dramatise it a bit, you've got to get the different voices in, get the emotions, the pauses in the right places and make sure that the children are engaged and that they're listening and getting something from it.
(INT1.1:8)

Abigail is referring to the social aspects of reading aloud to the children but also appears to be shifting her identity from that of student teacher to that of teacher as she participates in the classroom environment and engages in her own learning of children's involvement. Abigail continued her reflection by saying that the children were using the text to learn about characters' feelings and reader empathy and that these types of tasks help children with their reading by focusing on the concepts and skills required for understanding character development.

It helps them get into the book. If they can empathise with the characters and be able to infer and work out what they might do next, it's more enjoyable because you think OK I know what this character does so in this circumstance then x, y and z might happen and then you're reading on to discover if that does happen.
(INT1.1:9)

Following the completion of her second school placement, Abigail discussed her planning and teaching for some lessons she taught for the Year 5 unit on poetry. The class teacher, mentor, Abigail and her placement partner worked together on the planning and this was the first poetry the Year 5 children had studied in that academic year. The stimulus was *The Carnival of Animals* by Jack Prelutsky which was a text of poems based upon the classical music of Camille Saint-Saëns. The children listened to the music, looked at the illustrations and read and discussed the emotions in the poems. The initial immersion into this text involved much speaking and listening.

And just talking through it, lots of talking. The first week was pretty much all talking. (INT1.2:1)

Many poems were read and compared, with the final outcome being to improve the children's vocabulary and their imaginative writing. I asked Abigail how her planning and teaching of these lessons helped to develop the children's reading.

The literacy lessons were not really about reading story wise – it was a lot to do with getting inference and deducing emotion from the pieces and what it's really about. So, I guess it was mostly about getting them to read between the lines and think about – why did they use this word rather than another one. How does that change the feel of the writing, how can I use that in my own writing? (INT1.2:3)

The lessons in school are clearly related to skills and particularly the skills involved in writing. There seems to be very little focus in this unit of work on reading apart from that of inference, with the final outcome being to complete a piece of writing. Abigail is negotiating the school discourse together with the pressures on schools to produce written evidence from children in order to demonstrate their learning.

As highlighted previously, a key belief of Abigail's was the importance of reading for enjoyment and she felt that her lessons were engaging for the children and that they enjoyed reading the poems.

...I think they liked imagining... I think they enjoyed making the links and thinking about how a piece of poetry can make music and make movement and making the links between the subjects. (INT1.2:3)

However reflecting upon these lessons, Abigail also felt that they did not help to develop all of the children's reading. It was a successful unit of work for developing higher order skills but there were also children who were unable to read the poems in terms of decoding. The issues however seemed to go deeper than this and perhaps the children were not engaged due to the choice of text not inspiring them.

Sometimes I think they felt a bit disconnected with what was going on in the classroom. So maybe I would have chosen something that was more accessible to them. (INT1.2:5)

For a student teacher on their second school placement it is very difficult to disagree with the class teacher's choice of text and indeed to know the children well enough to be able to use texts which relate to their interests. This issue of children responding more readily to texts that are of interest to them was elaborated upon by Abigail in a further interview.

If it's something that interests them they're more likely to become engaged in the text but if it's something that they find not particularly interesting then they might not necessarily want to engage or they might not necessarily want to read as well as they might be able to. (INT1.3:2)

One of Abigail's literacy lessons was observed whilst she was on her final school placement, which she had identified as having a focus on reading. The learning objective for this lesson was 'to identify the features of a play script'. Notes from this lesson observation have been included in Appendix G.

The lesson was very much focused on the skills of identifying the features of a play script. Thus, there were several examples of IRF exchanges (66-68 and 76-78) and this was possibly a more closed pattern of interaction because the focus was on remembering key terms. There was also use of closed questions when reinforcing the key term of 'stage direction' (81). Much of the dialogue by the student teacher felt quite mechanical and prescriptive with discourses staying the same throughout. The scripts used had been located through a primary resources website and whilst Abigail chose these particular ones because she felt that they were relatable to the children and had an accessible reading level, the resource itself may have included some prescribed suggested questions. The result of this meant that there was little invitation for

explanation from the children and no evidence of questions such as ‘how do you know?’ or ‘why do you think this?’ There were numerous occasions when the student could have asked the child/children to elaborate on their answers, for example, when a child suggested that sometimes actors talk to the audience (115). With no following probing question, the child was not able to explain what was meant although he was probably referring to a pantomime. The absence of cognitive challenge added to the sense that the lesson was rather prescriptive in nature.

The children were however actively involved in the second part of the lesson with evidence of peer-peer talk in the use of ‘talk partners’ (65 and 89), suggesting that the student believed that children should be actively involved in their own learning. The children were then split up into groups and handed differentiated versions of play scripts. They were asked to decide on a character, read through the script and then perform the mini play. Abigail gave the children some aspects to think about while they were doing this: What are you saying?, what are the stage directions telling you? and what will your tone of voice be?

The other adult, the Teaching Assistant, took an active role in the lesson by reading out parts of the script and when she offered a suggested answer to the question on the features of play scripts (107). There was thus interaction between the student teacher and other member of staff within this lesson. There was evidence of collaborative enquiry with the peer-peer talk, the involvement of the other adult and the practical playing of roles by the children. This dialogue was supporting cognitive strategies more explicitly by the shared quest for understanding between children, student teacher and teaching assistant.

Following the lesson, Abigail suggested that she was looking specifically at the children's intonation and expression in their reading. Linking it to her own ideologies of reading, she wanted the children to go beyond just reading the words.

Because a lot of them in here just read the words rather than reading the words and thinking about how they should be said. (INT1.4:1)

Abigail found that her own philosophy of the teaching of reading was compromised during this school placement as the literacy lessons were very prescriptive due to a particular approach being used. The 'Talk for Writing' programme referred to by Abigail below is used in some primary schools as an attempt to improve children's reading and writing. The approach has three stages: imitation, innovation and independent application, which enables the children to practice language orally before reading, analysing and then finally writing their own version.

They use the Talk for Writing system and it is very much a three-week slot and you do your introduction, your innovation and then finish it off. Also you have a daily five session which is when they do independent reading and guided reading and it's quite structured, so it's quite difficult to focus a literacy lesson specifically on reading rather than the story or whatever text that they are working on. It's been interesting in finding ways to add that in around the structure that the enjoyment and engagement school uses. (INT1.4:2)

As a student teacher, she was trying to develop herself as a teacher of reading according to her own philosophies but was constrained by the power of the school discourse. There thus appears to be some evidence of a disjuncture in her identity as a reader and as a teacher. However, she was able to promote reading for enjoyment with the children by reading and telling them stories.

Yes, I do love my stories and they love it because I love it. (INT1.4:3)

Abigail discussed how this final placement was different to her second school placement. The previous school was more flexible in its structure of literacy with Abigail using medium-term plans as a guide to then plan her own lessons. In contrast, her final placement school's approach to literacy was more unyielding.

With the structure that they use here, it's slightly more rigid so whilst I can do some things of my own, I've got to follow the scheme that they're using, follow the structure of the lessons they have.

As with the whole stories and the whole enjoyment of reading thing – I do that whether they've got schemes or not. It's just something I think is really important so I'll do that in any year group/class. (INT1.4:4)

It appears that despite the constraints, this student teacher had developed the confidence to pursue her own ideologies of reading pedagogy despite the rigid structure imposed by the school.

4.7 Reading Policies

The participants generally had little to say on the policies associated with the teaching of reading suggesting that these had less impact on their understanding of reading compared to their personal experiences, beliefs and cultural factors. Rachel briefly discussed her views on the policy and political factors involved in the shaping of reading pedagogy and the resulting effect on teachers. She referred to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to which the students would have been introduced in their university-based sessions.

Obviously, those PISA results have just come out so we're trying to work towards places like Shanghai but I don't think we can really compare ourselves because they have such a tiny number of schools whereas we have lots. Although we need to go for phonics is the best way of teaching reading ... I think we just have to try and take a step back from political things and just do it for the

children that you have and know in your class much better than any politician would know. I think you just have to be a bit more autonomous and just make decisions that you know are right. (INT2.2:6/7)

In our discussion after Rachel's observed lesson, she talked more about government policy involvement in the teaching of reading and the pressures on teachers to reach government set targets.

In terms of the spelling, punctuation and grammar and things like that – yes especially with writing. The teacher says she feels like she's got a SATs monkey on her shoulder and she's always trying to teach to the test and things. It might be because I'm naïve but I kind of think that if they're reading and writing for pleasure then they will kind of pick it up along the way as well as having teacher input. But that might be because I'm a bit naïve and I haven't got enough experience. There is a really strong SATs under current. (INT2.3:4)

Target setting and the Standard Assessment Tests seemed to prompt the most discussion from the student teachers when they were asked about government policy. Yvette commented upon schools having to achieve targets and that this had much influence upon the teaching of reading.

For me there's so much focus on the targets and trying to get the children higher and higher with their reading and I don't know whether that is right in the sense you want them to get better or whether to let them get better at their own pace. I think that's a massive influence because I think teachers wouldn't push children quite as much if there weren't such a target based influence. (INT5.1:10)

Reflecting on the policy factors involved in the shaping of reading pedagogy, Abigail's first comment was on the Government's focus on phonics and the phonics test undertaken by children in Year 1. Asking children to read nonsense words was particularly highlighted and she couldn't understand the reasoning for this.

What's the point? It's ridiculous in my opinion. What's the need to decode nonsense words? It doesn't help anybody. (INT1.3:5)

The emphasis on testing as a whole was a further concern. She referred to Robin Alexander's views that the curriculum focuses too much on English and mathematics because these are the subjects which are assessed by summative testing.

...so it's very much being taught to pass the test rather than being taught to enjoy or to use what they're learning which is a shame and I think it's the reason why so many children leave school not wanting or not being able to read and write because they don't want to read because it's boring, it's hard because it's just for the test and not something they've discovered a love for. (INT1.3:5)

Apart from her comments on the testing of children, Abigail had little to say on policy matters. But what she does say hints at the information provided in university lectures and seminars: English sessions in university would have discussed the relevance of the phonics tests and the report from the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) was investigated as part of their Professional Studies module (refer to Appendix E).

4.8 Student Teacher Identity

For all the participants there appeared to be evidence of a disjuncture between their own identity as a reader and their identity as a teacher of reading. At the time of the first interview, Katy was just about to commence her second school placement in a Year 1 class. She was unsure as to how she was going to approach the teaching of reading because it was in contradiction to her own experiences as a reader and needed to focus on the skills of decoding rather than those of understanding and meaning. She related this back to the teaching of skills via the use of staged reading scheme books.

I don't know how I would teach reading. That's one of the things that worries me - early reading because they're still so young at reading. In a year 6 class or a year 4 class or a year 5 class you can teach reading because you're teaching them to understand a text whereas early reading you're teaching them to understand but you're also teaching them to decode the words which is something that I find quite tricky and one thing that I wanted to work on, on my placement. So I guess I would teach reading... I don't know- well you would have to use the staged books probably because that's what the school has in place. I guess I would teach reading that way for decoding and then story time and guided reading for understanding. (INT3.1:8/9)

Katy was trying to make sense of the different approaches to the teaching of reading together with the associated pedagogy. She felt less confident teaching children the skills of decoding but more confident teaching older children the comprehension aspects of learning to read. Her dilemma here is possibly linked to the disparity between the way she felt that she learnt to read and the strategies she was observing in schools.

At the time of the interview, Yvette was also at the start of her second year placement in a Year 2 class. The children were receiving phonics instruction which she felt helped with their reading and also guided reading sessions, which she was teaching by following specific sheets given to her by the class teacher. Each day she was asked to focus on a particular aspect of comprehension and ask children some key questions about the text. She linked the way she approached guided reading with her own experiences of learning to read.

When I'm doing guided reading with my class now I always think to look at the pictures but then am reading just reading the words and making sure you understand the words. Because when they don't know a word I think it is better for them to sound it out and then work out what that word is or do I give them a hint that it's in the picture? (INT5.1:4)

As with Katy, Yvette seems to be struggling with a disparity between the strategies she used in order to read as a child and the strategies she is being asked to employ in the classroom. As a child herself she used the illustrations in picture books to support both her decoding and comprehension but feels that this is the wrong strategy to be using in the classroom. In some schools, children are discouraged from using the illustrations in order to prepare them for reading books without illustrations and possibly this is the case in the school Yvette is working in. In her comment above, she is also trying to make sense of what reading is – is it just decoding and comprehension or is it something wider than this?

Disparity was further exemplified by Lucy's response to the question asking her if she had seen the teachers in school teaching reading.

The teaching of reading!? No, never. I've been in quite a few schools now – I did quite a bit of volunteering before I came to university because that's what I wanted to do.... I haven't really seen the teaching of reading at all. (INT 4.1:10)

It was hopefully not the case that the teachers were not teaching reading but that Lucy's perception of what the teaching of reading might look like was not being matched to her observations in the classrooms. Her expectations of what she understood as the teaching of reading was therefore not the same as the school discourse. Following this comment, I asked her what she would expect to see in a lesson where the teacher was teaching reading. She commented that up to then she had only been in Key Stage 2 classes and that she probably would have seen more teaching of reading had she been in Key Stage 1, specifying in particular the modelling of reading by the teacher. She also associated the teaching of reading with listening to an individual child reading, which following the introduction of guided reading sessions is not common practice in primary schools.

I would imagine it would be a case of reading it, following with your finger, showing children the words while you're reading it. (INT4.1:10)

I therefore asked Lucy how she had approached the teaching of reading on her placement.

I'm just trying to think how I taught reading. I don't think I really taught it, unfortunately we were so busy teaching actual lessons (INT4.2:3)

The problem for Lucy is perhaps not that she was not teaching reading but that she was not teaching it discretely. If the teaching of reading was embedded within the context of the 'actual lesson', she may not have realised that she was actually teaching reading.

Abigail's teaching on her second placement focused more on children's comprehension and understanding than decoding words, which is to be expected when working with a Year 5 class of children. Following this placement, we discussed student teachers' subject knowledge of comprehending texts and she felt that a student teacher's own comprehension skills had to be very strong in order to be able to teach children about understanding a text.

I think if teachers don't have strong comprehension skills then they're not going to be able to pass them on to their children. You've got to have good comprehension skills to be able to read and understand a text for yourself to be able to help children make meaning of that text. So I think it's really important. (INT1.3:1)

For Abigail, it was her own experience of reading that provided her with these skills, as she herself had not worked specifically on developing her comprehension skills in order to be able to teach this to children. What is also interesting from her comment above is that she turns my own term of 'student teacher' into 'teacher', again suggesting a

moving of identity as she perceives herself more as a teacher than as a student teacher at this point in her training.

When asked what knowledge a student teacher needs to have in order to teach reading, Abigail immediately referred to the skills of decoding and specifically phonics.

However, she then identified the importance of having a knowledge of children's literature and texts and using this for text-based work in order to provide children with a full reading experience. Again though, she only refers to books rather than a wider view of texts.

Well they obviously need to have the phonics knowledge that's drilled into us all to help with the really early reading and to help with the decoding of the actual words and getting the children to understand that that word is how we read whatever word they are looking at. So that very technical knowledge as well but then also to know how to pick texts that will engage the children. To see what interests the children and then to be able to find things that will interest them and to be able to base work on the books to make it a more rounded experience than just decode this sentence. (INT1.3:4)

Her use of the term 'drilled into us' reflects the intensity in which the teaching of phonics has been disseminated to the students both in school and in the university and the pressures on teachers to deliver lessons as directed by government policy. For Abigail, there were further pressures placed on student teachers when teaching reading in that they do have a responsibility to ensure children progress.

Yes you've obviously got to be able to demonstrate that you are able to help children progress in their learning of reading and writing. And if you can't then that's a really big thing. If you're not able to teach phonics and help the children to progress then you're going to fail. (INT1.3:5)

Towards the end of her final placement, she also felt the pressures of being a student teacher and the rigid constraints imposed by the school.

But reading wise – I think my big problem is that I’ve not been able to do my own lessons how I would like them specifically for literacy, which has been very constraining. I’m still trying to engage the children in stories and reading but not being able to follow that up in their specific lessons has been a bit frustrating. But obviously you’ve got to follow what the school is doing. There’s obviously a reason behind what the school is doing. (INT1.4:5)

As a student teacher, she feels that she is limited in the teaching of reading according to her own ideologies and has no option but to follow the directive of the school she is working in. The ‘reason’ for schools working in the way that they do is linked to issues of power and the pressures of achieving set targets.

All the participants referred to the pressures placed upon student teachers with this pressure arising from a number of different sources. In her first interview, Katy identified that there were pressures on student teachers in terms of what their ideologies of the teaching of reading should be together with pressures of trying to raise the achievement of the children in the classroom. There was also hint of a conflict of ideologies between the government and the ITE institution.

I feel like from tutors that I should be this ideology but then from the Government I should be this ideology. Tutors are more like well we should be thinking about knowledge about skills too but I think the Government is much more prone to the core knowledge. So then I think we’re influenced by both. (INT3.2:8)

I asked her if she felt that the tutors at the university were anti-government policy.

(Laughs) Perhaps a little. No, I think the tutor’s first concern is how we teach children and I think they try to influence us to be critical. I don’t think they’re

saying don't believe in this but they're trying to make us question it. Which is what...well I do. (INT3.2:8)

Katy was also aware of pressures from external sources on schools to achieve targets and felt that this was currently the biggest influence on the teaching of reading.

On the teaching of reading I think it's probably, not school pressure, but pressure for all schools to reach targets and to reach certain levels by the end and to progress children so many sub levels in a year and I think that they're aware of that and especially in schools that have/are trying to get outstanding from Ofsted or just trying to please the head teacher. (INT3.1:12)

Lucy felt that there was much pressure on student teachers in terms of the responsibility for children's learning. Although student teachers are not solely in charge of the children's learning in the classroom, they are required to demonstrate impact on children's progress whilst teaching and are thus assessed on this during their placements.

I think there are masses of pressures on student teachers. Well you go in and you take over the role as teacher and depending on how supportive your teacher is you're suddenly in charge of thirty little people and you don't have the experience and the knowledge and the know-how, especially not in the first year. It does depend on the class teacher that you have, some just step back and let you take over and that's great learning for you but what about the repercussions for the children that you have in the class... so personally I feel that as a student teacher you have a lot of responsibilities put on you.... (INT4.2:9)

4.9 Summary

The findings from the student teachers' data, suggests the following emerging themes:

- The student teachers' philosophies of learning to read related to their own experiences of reading as a child and these had links to both the psycholinguistic and sociocultural theories of reading rather than cognitive theories.
- The student teachers appear to have been involved in communities of practice in their own homes and in their primary schooling.
- Reading for enjoyment, the family, the role of an adult and one's own cultural values were viewed as being of importance and this has links to the students' own cultural capital.
- The students identified a difference between home and school literacy – the home equating with enjoyment and school with skills and reading being a 'chore'.
- Some of the students demonstrated a 'traditional' view of literacy with books and novels being the 'right' texts to read, which again links to their own cultural background. These same students appear not to value the use of digital texts and popular culture in the classroom.
- The student teachers demonstrated strong views about social class, which included normative views of the school community, and these views were consistent with 'deficit myths' of equating success in reading with a particular type of parenthood.
- The students' experiences of the school discourse, relating to the teaching of reading, was often in contradiction to their own beliefs of learning to read, resulting in a possible disjuncture in identity as a reader and as a teacher. Their

concept of learning to read changed from one of enjoyment to one of learning skills when relating it to school practice.

- Where lessons in school are seen as prescriptive, the students felt constrained by the school's discourse. However, some students had the confidence to include elements of their own philosophy of reading, particularly oral storytelling and reading for enjoyment.
- The student teachers identified some of the pressures on themselves as they engaged in their training although, their identities appeared to make changes as they became part of the classroom environment and the school discourses. The negotiation of the school discourse was a part of this movement in identity.

From these emerging themes, issues relating to disparities, the balancing of approaches, participation, the 'right things to read', pressures and constraints, power, accessing discourses, preconceptions of working class parents and shifting identities will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Culture, Power and Identity

5.1 Introduction

This research focused on the factors influencing student teachers' understanding of reading, the extent to which sociocultural beliefs have an influence on this understanding and the relationship between student teachers' own identities and their approaches to the learning and teaching of reading. This chapter will discuss the areas identified above from the findings in this study. It draws upon the analysis of the data collected, the work of others in this field, including the theoretical approach of funds of knowledge and the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1.

5.2. The Complexity of Culture

Sociocultural perspectives advocate that children's reading development is understood by exploring the cultural, social and historical contexts in which they are situated. All of the students referred to social situations and the interaction between themselves and members of their families as they engaged together in reading – their reading habits stemmed from the environment in which they were raised. There was a general atmosphere of reading in the home, whereby parents read to them when they were very young, made up oral stories, sang songs and rhymes, provided reading books and acted as role models. As Lave and Wenger (1991) state, learning to read is a cultural process and this is exemplified by the students' discussions of the shared reading practices they engaged in at home. All of the students identified that their first experiences of reading were of members of their family reading and were not linked to the skills of decoding.

As such their early reading experiences were a social activity embedded in interactions and not deemed as a set of skills to be learnt (Barton and Hamilton, 1998).

From the data collected, it could be argued that the student teachers' beliefs about how children learn to read were linked to their own experiences of reading and their own cultural identity as readers. In addition, the students' views of the purpose of reading were also linked to their own cultural identity and these beliefs related to the sociocultural understanding of the importance of social interaction. For Abigail, her short definition of the meaning of learning to read related to the worthwhileness of reading and reading for enjoyment. Similarly, Katy believed that the most important factor was the fun associated with reading and she linked this to her own experiences as a child. The student teachers' ideologies of learning to read therefore appear to be underpinned by sociocultural beliefs and as they undertook their school placements, they attempted to relate their practice to their own culture of reading and the social aspects of reading.

However, there also appeared to be a negative impact of these sociocultural beliefs when the student teachers were considering children from low socio-economic and working class families. Aspects of social class were discussed readily by the student teachers and they continued to use the terms 'working class' and 'middle class' to differentiate between peoples in society, despite also recognising that it was considered to be 'out-of-date' to do so. In addition, there were comments made which suggested that they were aware that social class in today's society has changed compared to previous definitions (Savage, 2015). For example, Yvette acknowledged that children from poorer backgrounds may have limited resources to support their reading at home and Katy felt that it was more to do with a person's education than social class.

Data from the interviews suggests that the student teachers believed there was a link between reading and cultural values, socio-economic status, social class, parenting and how a child is raised in the home. They indicated the view that some of the parents of the children they taught were unsupportive, not interested in their children's education and not prepared to spend time reading with their children at home. Abigail felt that the expectations of 'working class' parents were not the same as 'middle class' parents and as such the level of support was different. Rachel, meanwhile, held the view that different cultures demonstrated varying attitudes towards reading and Katy felt that the more educated a person was, the more likely they were to enjoy reading and convey this to their own children. The students' views often exemplified the deficit myths advocated by Gregory and Williams (2000) equating success in reading with a particular type of parenting. These deficit views were exhibited through negative preconceptions of the working class families, rather than viewing the children's experiences in the home as strengths and resources. It seems therefore that a key element was missing from the students' understanding of reading – an understanding of the social, historical, political and economic context of some of the children's families and how this might contribute positively to children's reading development.

The theoretical concept of the funds of knowledge approach (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2005) is a useful lens through which to discuss this possible gap in the student teachers' understanding. As discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, the funds of knowledge approach suggests that the normative characteristics of communities should not be viewed as dysfunction but as experiences and knowledge, which as pedagogical characteristics could be harnessed as resources for classroom teaching. In turn, this approach attempts to alter perceptions of working class or poor families and to view these households primarily in terms of their strengths and resources. The student

teachers only ‘knew’ the children from the classroom context and rarely drew on such funds of knowledge in their responses. However, perhaps this is understandable if students are placed in schools where they have no background knowledge of the local community. Katy recognised that she had little interaction with the pupils’ parents and little knowledge about the children’s home backgrounds. If the student teachers do not live within or know the people in the communities in which they are placed then they are more likely to assume that the parents and children have no regard for education or learning to read.

Gonzalez et al. (2005) advocate that the belief that children from poorer families share a ‘culture of poverty’ and common deficiencies such as below standard language and socialisation practices which are considered to be opposed to school achievement, has led to the development of deficit models within schools. The student teachers believed that children from low income and working class families were more likely to experience failure in reading because their home experiences had not provided them with the skills for success in the same way as the home experiences in middle class homes. In her first interview, Abigail commented that in some schools, expectations are not so high and that it is not deemed as important for children from working classes to read at a higher standard. It could therefore be argued that the student teachers’ expectations of traditionally low income and working class children in terms of reading are also reduced and the children offered strategies lessened in complexity to compensate for these perceived deficits.

For the student teachers there seem to be clear preconceptions about the home backgrounds of the poorer children in relation to their reading and there could be various reasons for this. Cultural deficit models appear to continue to be very prominent and the source of these misconceptions may go beyond local issues, stemming instead

from the broader political discourses of media coverage and government policies. The students may have been implicitly aware of policies such as the New Labour Government's (1997-2010) attempts to encourage working class families to adopt the practices of reading to their children and hearing their children read every day, via the media. It is perhaps therefore not surprising that they have assumed that these parents do not value education, provide their children with limited support and have poor parenting skills. With the students working in their placement schools for a short period of time, it is also possible that the students were yet to develop comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the literacy activities taking place in the school communities.

As well as wider contexts, there may also be preconceptions evident in teacher education programmes, implicitly or explicitly, whereby pupils' culture is viewed as deficient in cognitive and social resources for learning. If student teachers are encouraged to read literature which advocates that children from lower class families achieve less well in school due to a 'cognitive' deficit and poor parenting, without any critical reflection, then belief in deficit myths will continue.

The student teachers' own funds of knowledge may also be contributing to their perceptions of working class families and deficit views. We all carry with us cultural and emotional baggage that tends to influence our understanding and with learning being a social process, the students' own life experiences will be providing them with knowledge even if it is inaccurate knowledge. As discussed in Chapter Two, Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theories provide a theoretical underpinning for the social aspects of learning to read. From birth, we are socialised by others into cultural practices including the use of language and artefacts that become the 'tools for thinking'. From the Vygotskian perspective, human thinking is sociocultural because all

human action involves ‘mediation’ and cultural tools and practices are always implicated in how we think and develop, including reading the written word. This understanding of culture places it as a variable through which people differ and accumulate social and ideological experiences. However, this view also implies that the concept of culture consists of well-integrated groups of people who share the same values, which can result in normative ideas about particular communities. The student teachers’ deficit views may therefore be linked to their own cultural values and they may have these preconceived ideas of parents when they see parents of children in school behaving in a different way to their own. If their observations are not comparable with their own experiences then they may see some parents as not being supportive or not demonstrating any interest in reading.

The interview data from the student teachers suggests that they do not have the theoretical tools to support them in discovering for themselves the funds of knowledge of children and their families. They lacked comprehension of social life within some of the families and the knowledge of how to use these tools in order to interpret social contexts and actions. They needed to understand more fully that learning to read is linked to the resources from our social worlds and that by accessing these through social relationships, they can be used in order to develop children’s reading. Linking this to the ideas of funds of knowledge ,which perceives knowledge as being generated through the social and cultural histories of families and communicated to others through household activities, the concept of culture can be taken to a different level. The funds of knowledge approach supplements the views of Vygotsky by suggesting that culture is how people live culturally rather than as living within a culture. Knowledge is thus represented as a vital cultural resource and part of the ‘tools for thinking’ that families require for their wellbeing and learning. By viewing these as potential cultural resources

available for teachers and student teachers to understand the families of the children they are working with gives the opportunity for influencing classroom practice. According to Gonzalez, (2005:18) the concept of funds of knowledge ‘plays a major role as a cultural artefact in the Vygotskian sense, that helps mediate the teachers’ comprehension of social life within the households’. It could therefore be viewed as a strategic way of theorising households and people’s everyday experiences, without losing the richness of their lives, in order for student teachers to understand the complexities of the pupils’ lives.

As children, the students appeared to belong to various communities of practice in both their homes and school. Each of these communities contributed to their meaningful engagement in reading, with their own set of practices and discourses. This is in line with sociocultural views, which advocate that learning occurs through participation in social practices and the desire to become a participant in a particular community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Learning to read is however more than just participation, as it involves ‘changing participation’ (Rogoff, 2003). As we learn to do things within our own home environments such as riding a bike or learning to bake cakes our participation changes as our ability and expertise progresses. Rachel’s comment relating to the collaboration between her father and herself, as they learnt to read together, exemplifies this shared participation. She explained her own experiences of learning to read in terms of participating in a meaningful community of practice in the home, where their learning was seen as changing participation.

The students also appeared to become a part of the community of practice in the various classrooms in which they taught and they were able to do this by changing aspects of their identity (which will be discussed further in section 5.2.iii). Every community of practice has its own ideologically laden set of beliefs, actions and assumptions (Lewis et

al., 2007) and if, as Larson and Marsh (2005) suggest classrooms are culturally embedded communities of learners which reflect the social hierarchies in society then as teachers the students will be expected to create a community in their classrooms. If literacies are always situated in social, cultural, historical and political relationships and are embedded in structures of power (Lewis et al., 2007), then student teachers also need to get a clear understanding of both their literacy practices and the practices of the local community, including those of the children and their families. The challenge for the student teachers is that they will have to do this in a very short period of time and at the same time as implementing government policies on the teaching of reading. There may be little opportunity therefore to develop a reading culture to the extent that it will have an impact upon the children's motivation to read.

The term 'communities of practice' whilst is an important concept in the social aspect of learning to read also results in some underlying issues. As a notion, it could be becoming too wide with everyone belonging to endless 'communities of practice'. Gee (2004) argues against the term 'communities of practice' because the idea of community indicates close ties between the members which may not fit with the context of a classroom. It indicates 'membership' of the community and 'membership' means many different things across different communities of practice. Another key problem with the term 'community of practice' is that it can be seen as an attempt to label people and thus 'who is in' and 'who is out' of the community, which encourages boundaries. It is problematic to say whether all in the classroom are in a community of practice or not, just because they are within the same space. Gee (ibid) suggests we talk about 'affinity spaces' instead of communities of practice. In an 'affinity space', people will share common interests, which enables them to relate to each other irrespective of their race, gender, age, disability or social class. It provides a learning environment where all can

prosper allows creativity and originality and can allow the people in the space to lead the way and transform the organisation. In 'affinity spaces' knowledge is shared, scaffolded using a range of supports, dispersed, distributed and can take the form of tacit knowledge. In addition participation takes different forms and provides different ways to access learning and thus there are different ways to succeed with everyone having equal status (Gee, *ibid*). This idea of 'affinity spaces' rather than 'communities of practice' links more fully with the funds of knowledge view of people living culturally rather than within cultures and focusing more on this idea of 'spaces' may enable student teachers to relate children's reading experiences more fully to their experiences outside of the classroom.

The data suggests that the student teachers' own experiences led to a home/school divide and upon the texts they believed children should read, again representing more normative views of particular families. The students recalled very little from their own primary schooling and much of their recollections relate to reading at home. It was also noted that none of the students referred to enthusiastic teachers playing a part in their development as readers. The reason for this could be that they see a divide between school literacy and home literacy. Reading at home was associated with reading for enjoyment and pleasure whereas reading at school was related to the purpose of developing skills and often deemed as a 'chore'. Even Katy, an avid reader, viewed reading in school as having no value and was not motivated to engage. The general view was that there was a clear divide between reading for school and at home and therefore were considered to have differing status.

There was further evidence of this home/school divide in the texts that the student teachers valued for use in the classroom. Both Abigail and Rachel demonstrated a traditional view of literacy, (Larson and Marsh, 2005) and what counted as the 'right

things' to read was narrative fiction in the form of books. Their own experiences of reading such texts were viewed as being something that all children should enjoy. However, this is not necessarily the case and the impact of adhering to a traditional model of literacy is that the students view children who do not follow suit as being something negative. Thus, there appeared to be assumptions made about the quality of texts read as well as about some of the parents' practices within homes - with neither being viewed as valuable resources as per the funds of knowledge approach.

All the students acknowledged the use of digital texts and popular culture but did not always view it as having value in the teaching of reading. When referring to reading in the classroom, paper-based books were emphasised. Both Abigail and Rachel felt that popular culture had little significance in helping children to learn to read - the reason possibly being that it did not equate with their traditional view of 'quality' reading texts. Lucy, however, had used popular films to support her own reading journey and thus her positive experiences of such texts led her to view it as having some importance. Katy was perhaps the most reflective student when discussing home and school literacies, when she acknowledged that although there were differences, they also need to come together in the classroom. However, from the other student teachers there was little reflection in relation to the changing nature of literacy in the twenty-first century, the use of texts and the impact on children's reading. What is clear is that the students' own experiences and their own funds of knowledge have an effect on their view of appropriate texts for learning to read. For them, popular culture was for reading at home and not for use in the classroom. They thus tended to demonstrate a narrow view of literacy practices (Street 2003) and did not view the potential for literacy learning to occur in everyday interactions. The students acknowledged that reading is a skill which needs to be learnt in order to progress in school in all curriculum areas and in life, but

perhaps what they did not recognise is that the texts used in the classroom also need to be conducive to this.

For the student teachers, it could be argued that their 'habitus' is attuned to the teaching of reading as it is constituted in schools: the 'thinkable' for them is books and the 'unthinkable' is digital literacies, media literacies and the use of popular culture.

Bernstein's (2007) view was that out of school knowledge has no place in school because of 'framing'. With the teaching of reading being controlled by government policies, it is taken out of the hands of both the student teacher and the children they are teaching. Children recognise that their out-of-school knowledge is not valued and if the student teachers are promoting texts valued by the 'white middle classes' then this could be adding to the issue. In terms of Bernstein's (1977) views on pedagogies, the student teachers have to conform to both the policies on reading and the school's wishes. Their classrooms thus represent a model of visible pedagogy as demonstrated by the explicit teaching of reading skills. The student teachers showed no evidence of challenging traditional framing of knowledge in order to incorporate children's out of school interests in their reading choices and in meaningful ways that counteract the marginalisation of their language and literacy practices. This follows Bernstein's (1970:344) view that, 'if the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher'. If the student teachers were to view cultural life as a more dynamic entity as per the views of Moll (2000: 258) and see culture as part of human practices, 'situated in people's involvement with (and creation of) the multiple contexts that constitute their social worlds', then they may be able to overcome the barrier of marginalisation of practices.

In order to learn to read themselves the students identified the importance of their own culture, knowledge and experiences in order to make sense of a text. Every student had a different reading journey, 'just as no two individual histories are identical no two individual habitus are identical' (Bourdieu, 1990:46). As indicated previously, for the student teachers there seems to be a divide between their own habitus as a reader and the concept of the teaching of reading they are seeing in schools. However, they changed their perceptions of the important factors for reading because they could not go against the school discourse which in terms of Bourdieu is again 'unthinkable'. This suggests that there are other issues at work here – the influence of power.

For Bourdieu (1984) the school has the power to stress some forms of cultural capital and not others. In British classrooms, the school culture is the dominant culture (Moore, 2004) and this tends to be that of the 'white middle classes'. Returning to the findings of Brice Heath (1983) and how children from different communities were prepared for a school-based literacy, which valued middle class values, children themselves have to make changes to their literacy practices, as they become a part of the school literacy culture and learn how to be a reader in the context of the school setting. In the same way, the student teachers are learning how to be a teacher of reading in the context of the school setting and may also have to adapt their literacy practices.

The data suggests that the student teachers were trying to motivate children and use texts related to their interests but were sometimes confined by the prescriptive nature of some of the reading schemes used in schools. However, they also demonstrated an awareness of the dichotomy between the way texts are selected and read in class and the negative impact this can have on individual reader identity. This was reflected in their progress in becoming a teacher of reading - by being aware of the things children value

and taking a personal interest in these, they would be able to provide the children with a relevant focus and context for their learning.

It seems therefore that when considering the effect of sociocultural beliefs on the student teachers understanding of reading, it is not enough to just focus on aspects of culture. In education, disparities for some children have certainly been recognised and this has resulted in discourses focusing on teachers getting to know the culture of the children in the classroom. The culture in schools has been identified as being different to the cultural world of some children and teachers have been encouraged to engage in community based linguistic and cultural patterns. However, these discourses tend to focus on classroom and language practices and were generally based on the assumption that children of particular groups shared a normative, bounded and integrated view of their own culture (Gonzalez et al. 2005). There is perhaps a problem with the notion of culture and as discussed in the conceptual framework (Chapter 1.5), this may be that sociocultural theories do not account for the role of power in educational institutions. The idea that knowledge is connected to power (Foucault 1980, 1984) and a focus on discourses rather than just culture would enable teachers and student teachers to acknowledge the power of social relationships in the construction of knowledge.

Similarly, ‘cultural differences’ approaches which focus on interactional patterns between teachers and children, disguise the underlying issues of economic and power relations between different populations. Thus the ‘deeper structural context of cultural production and school failure remained obscure and largely unaddressed’ (Gonzalez, 2005:37). The funds of knowledge approach suggests that culture can be seen as a set of inquiries in order to take into account the way in which pupils draw upon an intercultural and hybrid knowledge base (Bhabha 1995) and appropriate multiple cultural systems. It goes beyond the problematic nature of cultural differences by

focusing on practice – by encouraging reciprocal relationships between teachers and parents, acknowledging the value of household knowledge to pedagogy and the development of teachers as researchers which bridges the divide between home and school and actively involves household communities in dialogue which may address the unequal relations between school and community. When considering the effect of sociocultural beliefs on the student teachers understanding of reading it is therefore necessary to go further than just focusing on culture and also look at the effect of power relations.

5.3 The Pressure of Power Relations

As exemplified in the previous section and stated in the conceptual framework in Chapter 1.5, issues of power also need to be considered when analysing the effect of sociocultural views on the student teachers' understanding of reading. If as Lewis et al., (2012) suggest, learning occurs within participation of discourse communities, then the learning will also be shaped by power relations. Power relations in turn can then result in pressures and constraints on those participating.

What was noticeable throughout the interviews was that none of the students referred to any policies or theories of reading to support their discussions. Even the current model, The Simple View of Reading, was referred to only implicitly. The students appear not to explicitly relate the policies and theories shared in university sessions with the practices they were observing and participating in within their placement schools. Going by the responses in the interviews there appears to be little reflection made by the student teachers upon the theoretical background underpinning their experiences of reading pedagogy. However, they clearly had an understanding of the different theories

because they were able to articulate the various ways in which we learn to read thus not discussing the theories does not necessarily mean that they had not assimilated them.

Despite having little to say about policy, the students' understanding of the factors involved in learning to read was influenced by the political purposes of those in power and the resulting policies. They had to follow the current model of reading including the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and skills of comprehension although this had been interpreted in different ways by their various placement schools. Government, school and university discourses thus had an impact upon the students as they developed their views on learning to read.

What the student teachers in my study were very concerned about was national testing and the impact it was having upon teaching and learning, perhaps prompted by their university studies. As Moore (2004), states the national focus on raising achievement test scores and the prescriptive curriculum has resulted in teachers being faced with mandates to standardise literacy teaching and learning even though it may go against their beliefs about learning to read. The student teachers were feeling these pressures, as they were held accountable for children's progress in their placement schools. They also identified that there were constraints imposed upon their teaching by the schools in which they were completing their placement. This resulted in their beliefs of learning to read sometimes being compromised when teaching in school due to prescriptive lessons.

In line with Twiselton's (2000) findings, students that are more confident can pursue their own ideologies of reading pedagogy despite the structures imposed by the schools. For some of the student teachers in my study there was evidence that they were developing this confidence to question some of the pedagogies in schools and

implement some of their own philosophies of reading and were beginning to develop their own innovative practice for the teaching of reading (Pitfield and Obied, 2010). Linking back to the conceptual framework in Chapter 1 it appears that power is also being produced in and through the students as they participate in and reproduce those systems, as per Foucault's (1980) definitions of resistance and dominance. By beginning to question some of the practice they had observed in schools and taking opportunities to include aspects of their own beliefs such as reading for enjoyment and oral storytelling, the student teachers were beginning to exercise some of their own power over the ways in which children learn to read.

In this research study, there was however another aspect of power present: that between researcher and student teacher. Despite carefully considering the ethical issues around working with student teachers and ensuring that no student felt under pressure to participate, there were clear issues of power evident. This was particularly true between myself and Rachel and possibly the other student teachers too. The issue was more to do with Rachel trying to ensure that she was giving 'correct' responses and that her views on learning to read were consistent with both the university and governmental discourses. This is perhaps further evidence of the pressures on students to reach the required teaching standards. If students are assessed on their knowledge of systematic synthetic phonics and the principles underlying them, then perhaps it is not surprising that this was the basis of Rachel's initial responses in her first interview. Referring back to the discussion of power in Section 1.5.1, this issue could relate to the critical sociocultural perspective that power is produced and enacted through discourses and relationships. Power is produced in every day interactions and discourses including that between researcher and participant. By confirming her knowledge and understanding of the dominant discourse, it did not mean that Rachel was actually stating her beliefs and

values about the learning and teaching of reading. As Moje and Lewis (2007:18) state: ‘we can participate in creating differently valued subject positions, even when attempting to challenge or subvert oppressive power relations’. It is perhaps this more explicit analysis of the workings and effects of power which is missing from sociocultural perspectives.

It could also be argued that Rachel was exercising her own power during the interview situation. As Foucault states (1998) power can be implemented from innumerable points and any participant in an interview situation has the control over what they say or do not say. Rachel could have been positioning herself in order to establish her own identity within the structures of power during the particular section of the interview as she engaged with the discourses at play.

If the student teachers are to participate in the processes of supporting children in their reading then they need to be able to access the discourses at work in the classrooms. As stated in Chapter 2.3.2, understanding of reading as a social practice also requires understanding of the role discourse plays in learning to read. Returning to the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) who stated that a child’s cognitive development requires engagement through spoken language with adults, other children and the wider culture - language and thought are related. Children construct meaning not only from the interplay between what they encounter and what they already know, but also from interaction with others. Therefore, children’s cognitive development depends to a considerable degree on the forms and contexts of language they have encountered and used. The dialogue happening in the classroom will therefore make a meaningful contribution to their learning and understanding of reading. As previously discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, Bakhtin (1981; 1986) argues that dialogue is essential to discourses and linking Bakhtin to Vygotsky – dialogue is about helping children to locate themselves within their

discussions of culture and history. Thus, classroom talk mediates not just teaching and learning but also the wider culture (Daniels 2001).

Linking back to discussions of the concept of funds of knowledge, by engaging with pupils' lives and acknowledging competing discourses, the student teachers could begin to conceptualise the hybridity that emerges from the intersection of different funds of knowledge. Practices are constructed through discourses and by developing patterns of participation rather than just transferring knowledge as Greeno (1997) suggests with the notion of 'generality of knowing', the student teachers would be able to connect their understanding with other types of knowledge, encourage children to do the same and in turn contribute to their own identities as learners.

The transcripts of the two students' lesson observations were able to demonstrate some of the discourses occurring in the classrooms. In both lessons, there were clear examples of IRF which is associated with teacher talk. Often it was associated with the skills of reading or with classroom management. This may be because it was a form of classroom talk the students were familiar with from their own classroom experiences or perhaps because it was a dialogue which gave them some security. By using IRF exchanges, the student teachers were able to maintain control of the events happening in the classroom together with the ideas dealt with within the lesson. That is, it enabled them to keep hold of the power in the lesson. However, there is also a concern that the students were caught in the trap of prioritising patterns of classroom discourses which relate to the teaching of skills. With the prescriptive nature of the teaching of discrete systematic synthetic phonics and other schemes for the teaching of reading comprehension, it is possible that Alexander's (2005) concerns that classroom discourses and practices are shaped by wider systems of relationships are founded. The resulting talk occurring in the classroom could become one of testing for facts rather

than supporting the construction of new knowledge. If classroom talk is to make a meaningful contribution to children's learning of reading, student teachers need encouraging to move beyond the 'acting out of cognitively restricting rituals' (Alexander 2017:14). It could therefore be argued that in the student teachers' classrooms the pedagogic discourses in the classroom were reflecting the priorities and discourses of wider society regardless of the particular pedagogic purposes intended (Gee 1999).

Power is a complicated construct but one that cannot be dismissed when discussing learning and in the case of this study, learning to read. Learning is situated within discourse communities and as seen in the discussions of funds of knowledge, people within these communities are not always treated equally. Power is produced through discourses, activities and relationships by people as they access and control resources (Lewis et al., 2007). Following from this, learning is not just the acquisition of ideas (Vygotsky, 1978) but also the reconceptualisation of skills and knowledge through the acquisition of existing discourses or transforming fixed discourses (Lewis et al., 2007). From this, learning can be conceptualised as shifts in identity and thus the following section will discuss whether shifts in identity have had any effect on the student teachers' understanding of reading.

5.4 Student Teachers' Shifting Identities

Learning to teach reading involves deep participatory learning – not just learning the tools on how to teach reading but how to think and act like a teacher of reading. The student teachers in this study seemed to require further support as they tried to make sense of the theory and practice, rather than simply transferring theory into practice. Student teachers want to be equipped with knowledge about 'what works' in the

teaching of reading but they need to go beyond transferring knowledge gained in one context and applying it to another. As suggested in the previous section they need to develop patterns of participation that contributes to their identities as learners (Greeno, 1997).

From the students' responses, their reading as adults varied according to their experiences as a child. For Yvette, there was no point or benefit in reading purely for enjoyment, reading was not an identity for her as it was for those who enjoy reading, and was a role she engaged in mainly for academic purposes (Strommen and Mates, 2004). In terms of Bourdieu's (1984) concept, Yvette was unable to access the cultural capital generated by readers because she did not have the code.

Not all student teachers have a love of reading as Yvette's case demonstrated. This does not necessarily mean that they will be an ineffective teacher of reading. Becoming a successful teacher of reading includes many variables such as educational background, personality, interests and not just a positive attitude towards reading. Teaching children to read goes beyond the local contexts of literacy and the broader ideologies because it is inherently linked to identity. As discussed in the previous section, the students experience school discourses which can be in contradiction to their own views on learning to read. This can result in them demonstrating a shift in identity, as they participate in the classroom environment and interact with these discourses. In many ways, they have no choice as they have to meet the Teachers Standards and university expectations. The discourses, in which the student teachers engage in, contribute to the shaping of their identities and are linked to the issues of power. Linking this to the theoretical lens of Gee (1996) and his view that Discourse represents the various culturally organised ways of acting and being in the world, student teachers need to learn the Discourses required in order to conform to school practices and purposes.

With their experiences of children learning to read illustrating how different discourses interact together, they managed this by making shifts in their own identity. Linking back to the funds of knowledge approach this shifting of identity or concept of agency can account for how the student teachers adopt some elements of cultural practices and discard others. Within the funds of knowledge approach, the notion of cultural production enables the student teachers to become active agents in constructing their identities and ideologies rather than passive recipients of modes of culture (Gonzalez, 2005). There are indications that the student teachers in this study were engaging in this as they developed their sense of place within the classrooms as teachers of reading. As they became participating members of the various classrooms they entered, they also became part of the social fabric of the school and demonstrated aspects of occupational socialisation (Evans, 2010).

Whilst their prior experiences of reading played a key role as they constructed their identity as a student teacher (Lortie, 1975), they adopted the ideologies and behaviours expected in the school in order to teach children how to read. In contrast to the views of Flores and Day (2006), the student teachers in this study did not appear to be ‘de-stabilised’ by this experience. Instead, they seemed to be very adept at managing the different demands placed upon them. There was also no evidence that they were ‘invisible’ learners (Long, 2012), but demonstrated their learning as they grappled with new identities. They appeared to be strategically making and re-making their identities within the structures of power (agency) positioning themselves to allow for new identities. As individuals we can have multiple identities as it is a fluid process and as Gee (2000) states, identity is not just about how humans define themselves but how they are positioned and defined by those around them. Thus, the student teachers’ identities were shaped within and by the interactions with others in the professional context and

recognition of their identity in the teaching context may have resulted in the empowerment to move ideas forward.

The students' identity as a teacher of reading was therefore dynamic rather than fixed and this emphasis on the process is a form of on-going interaction within the student teachers' development. This multifaceted and dynamic nature of agency and its changing shape is as a result of the influence of contextual factors such as the classroom, the school environment, the children they are working with, school staff, colleagues, tutors, the educational institution and the wider community. However, the students still maintained their core identities which were created by their prior histories, and these provided a relatively stable framework from which new identities developed (Gee, 1991).

The data suggest, though, that there was occasionally some disjuncture in identity as a reader and as a teacher. Nevertheless, where this conflict and disparity occurred was also where the students were shaping their identities in relation to the conflicting discourses they were experiencing and thus where learning was taking place. The students' experiences were grounded in theories of literacy, learning, culture and history and through participating in the practices of teaching and learning, those theories developed and changed, in addition to the students themselves. As the students negotiated between theory and practice, they appeared to be in an in-between space and this may account for why they did not refer to any theories in the interviews. However, uncertainty may not necessarily be a bad thing- as again it is all part of the learning process.

The student teachers had different identities – as readers themselves, as students and as teachers. They sometimes expressed more than one at any time and appeared to move

easily between them. The students' identities are the grounds in which they take a stand upon their varying roles. Sometimes they may be a little unsure of how to negotiate their identities as professionals, feel under pressure to say and do the 'correct' things and be anxious to adhere to their convictions but on the whole they were making a good attempt at managing this. The next section will discuss how the student teachers' changing identities enabled them to deal with different approaches to reading in the classroom.

5.5 Disparities or the Balancing of Approaches?

All the student teachers seemed to experience a disparity between their own experiences of learning to read and the practice they were experiencing in the classroom. Katy was unsure about approaching the teaching of reading because it was in contradiction to her own experiences; Lucy's understanding of what she perceived to be the teaching of reading was not matched by her observations in school and Yvette felt unable to use her own strategies in the classroom because they were not deemed to be correct. As the student teachers engaged in their various teaching practices in schools, they engaged with cognitive psychological perspectives on the teaching of reading which was in contrast to their own experiences. Abigail highlighted that the lessons on reading in her placement schools related to the cognitive skills of learning the 'sounds' in the words. Similarly, Rachel's schools were teaching systematic synthetic phonics every day in accordance with government policies, which she found difficult to comprehend as it was not comparable to how she had learnt to read. The students were experiencing in practice the staged progression of the reading process as advocated by cognitive psychological theorists such as Ehri (1987) and government policy together with the teaching of reading through emphasis on the letter-sound correspondences.

The students' understanding of the pedagogy of reading seemed to relate more to the skills of reading and the associated cognitive theories and when asked what learning to read means, they referred to experiences in school. However, when the students reflected on what is important in terms of reading they referred back to their sociocultural beliefs. This could have been the result of the influence of a variety of external factors such as school discourses, the views of teachers and the students' peers, the university discourses, the standards for teaching and policies on reading. The students were exploring their own wider conceptions of learning to read but these external factors were then influencing their practice within the classroom. The student teachers' beliefs about learning to read were influenced by their own personal reading histories and interactions with reading but they were then bound by external influences when teaching reading in the classroom. They seemed to be presenting their beliefs about learning to read sometimes as individualised and a set of skills, sometimes as more diverse and linked to social practice. However, when referring to reading in the classroom, it was the discussion of skills, which was emphasised. Linking this to Street's two models of conceptualising literacy (1984) - 'autonomous' literacy consisting of technical skills that are learned independently from social or cultural influences and 'ideological' literacy which is a social practice and relates to power structures in society; the student teachers seemed to be negotiating between the two depending on the context of their discussions. The students did not appear to see the differences in their responses as a problem and certainly not one of conflict. Instead, they appeared to be moving between the two approaches on a continuum as advocated by Larson and Marsh (2005).

However, the student teachers' own experiences of learning to read were considered to be of importance to them and thus there appeared to be some tension between the

students' personal beliefs and school practices. There also appeared to be a divide between the students' own habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) and the current strategies of the teaching of reading in schools. Conversely, the student teachers also seemed to be assimilating the discourses of the teaching of reading encountered in schools, thus changing their habitus in relation to specific contexts (Navarro, 2006) despite any confusion and puzzlement they were experiencing.

With current teaching strategies being firmly affiliated to cognitive psychological theories and the decoding and deciphering of words being of key importance, this resulted in the students' experiences of teaching reading in school being very different to how they learnt to read themselves. However, the students seemed to be very much adept at moving from one experience to another rather than it being an 'either/or' situation. Student teachers need to be able to draw from a range of theories as they are grappling with the complexities of helping children to learn to read and in terms of the practical side of teaching, this seemed to be what they were doing. They were becoming active participants as they negotiated strategies to develop their teaching knowledge, professional behaviour and skills (Mahlios et al., 2008). Their beliefs were resilient (Britzman, 1991, Massengill-Shaw et al., 2005), but they were also open to accepting new concepts and strategies when it came to understanding about learning to read. Their own beliefs drew their power from their own experiences and became a source of inspiration for their teaching (Nespor, 1987), but they were able to combine this with the practices of learning to read experienced in their current classrooms. They changed their practices in line with the prevailing discourses and strategies but their own personal beliefs remained because they were well embedded into their own personae (Richardson and Placier, 2001). This also links to the literacy discourses which were socialising the student teachers when they were in the classroom. They were interacting

with the discourse as representative of a group in the classroom and ‘ways of knowing’ (Bruner, 1996).

In addition, the students’ own beliefs about the teaching of reading should not be dismissed. As seen with Abigail, her own beliefs about the importance of storytelling enhanced her teaching practice. Whilst studies such as Massengill-Shaw et al. (2005) argue that students’ strongly held beliefs can affect how much they internalise the content of their Initial Teacher Education, these student teachers seemed to be able to combine their own beliefs with the expectations of the prevailing pedagogy and the school. They appeared to be able to balance the different approaches as they supported children in mastering the mechanics of reading whilst also encouraging the more imaginative aspects of reading and the contextualisation of meaningful texts as suggested by Taylor and Pearson (2002). Perhaps the student teachers were demonstrating that the psycholinguistic, cognitive and sociocultural perspectives are not completely opposed to each other but can work together. Purcell-Gates et al., (2004) propose that the cognitive occurs in a sociocultural context and that both are necessary for educational success and that we need an integration of theories in order to equalise educational practices as each is too narrow on its own. The student teachers seemed to be demonstrating an understanding that cognitive development occurs within a sociocultural sphere of experience and were trying their best to combine the different theoretical perspectives on reading and attempting to balance differing approaches to reading. Perhaps, therefore, it is less about disparity and more about balance.

5.4 Concluding Comments

As they progress through their Initial Teacher Education, student teachers learn from their own and each other's experiences, from interactions with their pupils, from the advice and modelling of their university tutors, mentors and class teachers and from their reading for and writing of assignments. They learn and develop understandings about how we learn to read, just as they learn that it is no simple matter. The ensuing issues will be discussed in the following final chapter.

Chapter Six

Conformity, Complexity and Confusion

6.1 Introduction and Summary of the Research

This chapter presents the conclusions for this research investigation, which examined the factors influencing student teachers' understanding of reading. This study was set within the context of Initial Teacher Education and the teaching of reading in England. The research sample was taken from five undergraduate student teachers as they progressed through a three-year Primary Education programme with Qualified Teacher Status. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations of students teaching reading in the classroom.

As outlined in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to contribute to existing knowledge about the learning of reading, to develop an understanding of the student teachers' perspectives and the factors involved in this. It was important to focus this research on student teachers because while there have been many studies conducted with in-service teachers, it was felt to be necessary to explore understanding prior to teachers commencing their teaching careers. There was a need for a more in-depth understanding of teachers of reading from the very first stages of their teacher education to enable the addressing of any issues before students became fully qualified teachers. With the continuing debates on the best ways of teaching reading, exploring the student teachers' understanding, beliefs and practices provided an opportunity to develop a deeper insight into the views and practices of the future teachers of reading.

The concluding remarks in this chapter thus aim to answer the four research questions set out in Chapter 1.6:

1. What factors influence student teachers' understanding of reading?
2. To what extent do sociocultural beliefs have an effect on student teachers' understanding of reading?
3. What is the relationship between student teachers' own identities and their approaches to the learning and teaching of reading?
4. What are the potential implications for Initial Teacher Education?

The key contribution points for this research study are summarised as below:

A key element was missing in the student teachers' understanding of reading – an understanding of the social, historical, political and economic context of pupils' families and how this might have a positive influence on their reading. This resulted in deficit assumptions of some 'working class' families.

Student teachers are able to balance different approaches relating to reading and they are able to do this by making shifts in their identity. However, sociocultural beliefs do not account for the shaping of identity in relation to the conflicting discourses the student teachers were experiencing in educational institutions and the wider world.

In the context of reading, sociocultural beliefs are not enough, as they do not account for the issues of power and identity, which the student teachers were experiencing, as they became teachers of reading. Focusing on culture alone was not sufficient when exploring student teachers' understanding of reading. There is thus a need for a wider

conception of sociocultural theory such as critical sociocultural theory when analysing understandings of reading.

6.2 Complexity, Conformity and Confusion

This study showed that there were a number of factors influencing the student teachers' understanding of reading. These were both intrinsic and extrinsic and tended to be wide ranging, interwoven and complex. Intrinsic factors included the student teachers' own experiences of learning to read which tended to link to the psycholinguistic theories and social aspects. The student teachers' experiences of reading for pleasure and enjoyment as children themselves was also a key contributor to their beliefs of what children need in order to be able to learn to read

Extrinsic factors also influenced the student teachers' understanding of the learning and teaching of reading. Their experiences and observations in schools focused on the cognitive psychological theories of learning to read and a staged process of teaching reading, in particular, the teaching of Systematic Synthetic Phonics was very different to the ways in which they had learnt to read themselves. The teaching the students were observing and conducting in school themselves was thus in contrast to their own experiences, leading them to see a difference between how we learn to read and how we teach a child to read. There also appeared to be a divide between their own 'habitus' and the teaching strategies they were using in schools. This disparity appeared to cause some tension and confusion for the student teachers but they also seemed to be quite adept at managing the different theories and discourses associated with how we learn to read. They were able to balance the different approaches to reading and this is perhaps something others can learn from them.

The university sessions and Initial Teacher Education curriculum also had some impact upon the student teachers' understanding of learning to read. The students were introduced to the different theories of reading in their university sessions, although appeared not to relate the theories to the practice they were experiencing in schools. There was little evidence in the interviews of the students reflecting on why there were different perspectives on learning to read.

The pedagogical content associated with the teaching of reading also added to the complexity. The two students' lessons demonstrated a combination of their own experiences of learning to read together with conforming to the school and government discourses on the teaching of reading. In the lessons observed, the students were using a variety of pedagogies such as shared reading, teacher modelling, drama, opportunities and exploratory talk but they were also experiencing a curriculum which was prescriptive in nature and had to conform to this. In addition, they also attempted to introduce some of their own beliefs about learning to read, which further exemplifies the complexity of their experiences.

With respect to the second research question and whether sociocultural beliefs had an effect on the student teachers' understanding, the findings suggest that both the social aspects of learning to read and their own experiences had an influence. Reading was viewed as a cultural process by the student teachers in their discussions of the social activities they engaged in, in their homes. The students belonged to various communities of practice or perhaps 'affinity of spaces' and demonstrated their learning through become part of the changing participation. They engaged in these communities in the classroom, managed the disparity between the different ways of learning to read due to the way in which they were able to shift their identities as student teachers.

Adding to the complexity of the influence of sociocultural beliefs was the economic context and issues of social class. Links were made by the students between cultural values, socioeconomic status and the implications of this for children's reading development. The student teachers' views about parenting and the link to successful reading demonstrated Moll's (2000) notion of funds of knowledge and linked to their own experiences and beliefs about 'good' parenting. This also exemplifies 'deficit' models of perceptions about communities in our society. However, these views have to stem from somewhere and this could have been the students' own cultural background and funds of knowledge or the wider political discourses of the media and government publications or policies. Complicating matters further, these views may be skewed by the geographical location of the study. Nevertheless, for the students in this study they clearly need to develop a deeper understanding of current class issues in society in order to avoid such assumptions. In addition, it could be the case that teacher education has not kept up with the implications of sociocultural beliefs, due to the policy constraints placed upon them to focus upon the teaching of reading using systematic synthetic phonics.

The students referred to a divide between home and school literacies. Reading at home was associated with pleasure, while reading in school was related to the skills of learning to read. This then linked to their views of the right texts to use in the classroom. Demonstrating a traditional view of texts, some of the student teachers advocated that fiction books were the important texts to use for the learning and teaching of reading whereas, the use of digital texts and popular culture in the classroom was not appropriate. This traditional view of texts can be considered a narrow one in the 21st century and is an area worthy of pursuing with the student teachers. However, there

are also links to conformity here, as student teachers have to adhere to the requirements of their placement schools and often have no choice in the texts used in the classroom.

For the third research question, the findings of this study suggest that students' beliefs about learning to read are based on their own experiences and their own cultural background. These beliefs include reading for pleasure and the importance of social interaction which link to sociocultural beliefs of reading. However, external factors have added to the complexity and resulted in some confusion. The teaching of reading in classrooms, following more cognitive psychological theories of reading, resulted in the students moving away from the social aspects of reading to the skills of learning to read, when discussing the teaching of reading. These movements and shifts in identity seem to demonstrate that they are open to new concepts and are able to conform to the prevailing discourses of schools, policies and university sessions. Students also have to adhere to the teacher standards and the grading system for gaining qualified teacher status.

It appears then that student teachers engage in shifts in identity as they progress through their teacher education and into becoming a Newly Qualified Teacher. These shifts in identity will continue throughout their career as they interact with schools and the communities within which they are teaching. However, the issue of identity is complex. We need to continue to develop our understanding of student teacher identity so that teacher education programmes can be enhanced and identity can be more effectively addressed as a component in teacher education.

My own beliefs about the learning and teaching of reading is that it is a complex process and different strategies need to be utilised according to the differing needs and ways in which children learn. However, I also firmly believe that learning how to read

written language is culturally formed. The sociocultural approach which advocates that reading is a social practice and situated in communities with similar norms and values appears to apply to my own views. However, undertaking this research with the student teachers has shown that this approach is not enough as there are so many different complexities involved. The students did demonstrate shifts in their identity as they became teachers of reading but this was not just due to them becoming a member of the community of practice or 'affinity of space'. These shifts were associated with the conflicting discourses they experienced in their own lives, in education policies and in their schools and classrooms. The shifts in identity were also linked to issues of power within the systems and structures of the educational institutions, the larger systems of power within the context of children learning to read and with the students themselves as they engaged in the research process. The critical sociocultural theory as proposed by Lewis et al. (2012) which expands upon sociocultural theory to include these matters of power, identity and agency therefore supported more fully the analysis of the student teachers' beliefs about reading.

6.3 Implications for Initial Teacher Education

Given the discussions set out above and the key contribution points, there are some potential implications for Initial Teacher Education and policy makers. These implications are set out below and address the final research question of this study.

These suggestions are not intended to undermine the excellent work and support Initial Teacher Educators provide for their student teachers but are meant to provide some points for thought. Initial Teacher Educators can be heartened by the way in which these student teachers were managing the complexities associated with learning to read.

Despite experiencing disparities between the way they learnt to read and the current

teaching methods, they seemed to manage well and were using a combination of approaches in their classrooms.

There were some concerns raised in this study regarding the student teachers' perceptions of lower class parents. They appeared to have little knowledge and understanding of current social class issues and the positioning of the lower classes in education. This is not to say that other Initial Teacher Education students do not have an awareness of social class differences and the impact this can have on children as they are learning to read, but we need to take note of it. Student teachers need guidance on how to support children's identity and learning as cultural beings. They also need guidance to understand themselves as cultural beings in order to gain an awareness of any unconscious bias towards cultural practices, values and perspectives of the children they engage with in the classroom. Ultimately, they need to be encouraged to engage with the children and their backgrounds rather than making assumptions.

In order to address this gap in knowledge, student teachers require supporting from ITE institutions and schools with comprehension of social life within the families in the community and about the knowledge that children are already familiar with. Once they have acquired this knowledge and understanding, it needs to be used as a basis for learning without falling into the trap of stereotyping. The need to develop understanding of diverse funds of knowledge together with the linking of sociocultural perspectives and constructivist approaches should assist with making connections between the funds of knowledge concept and their own experiences. This will build the awareness of student teachers to the resources which are present in children's life experiences and which may be very different to their own.

The teachers in Moll's (2000) study were engaged in research with the families in the community which enabled them to learn about knowledge and experiences within the households. Whilst this may not be possible for student teachers, it is something both class teachers and Initial Education Institutions can complete which can then be imparted to the student teachers via constructive conversations so that they learn more about the children they are teaching and can see the reading they are engaging in within the home as a strength and resource. Encouraging student teachers to ask questions with the intent to learn more about the children's backgrounds will also be a powerful method for establishing the validation of community-based knowledge. With a surge in global migration in recent years and the population in England becoming more diverse, this is probably more important than ever before.

By encouraging student teachers to use theoretical tools such as funds of knowledge they will become more successful at interpreting social contexts and actions and know the children more fully as learners. In addition, they can be supported in theorising practices both in and outside of the classroom by deeper use of reflection. Perhaps, Initial Teacher Education institutions need to look at some of their modules to try to address this problem to ensure that students are aware of the central role social class plays in education and do not enter their teaching career with pre-conceived views of certain families. We need to go beyond the 'unthinkable' in terms of discussing issues relating to social class and encourage student teachers to self-reflect on both their ideological assumptions and pedagogical practices to ensure that inequities of access and participation do not occur. Teacher educators also need to consider how far they account for the student teachers' funds of knowledge as they facilitate course work, professional development and reflection.

Initial Teacher Education institutions could consider including modules relating to social justice within their programmes to support student teachers working in schools with increasing cultural diversity. By developing student teachers' sociocultural consciousness, it will encourage the avoidance of stereotyping and enable them to access the cultural world of their pupils. In addition, by the modelling of culturally responsive pedagogy, the selection of ITE strategies will enable the improvement of student teachers' skills for culturally responsive practice.

Initial Teacher Education institutions may need to take into account that their students require the opportunity to develop a fuller understanding of the communities in which they are placed on their school placements together with time to develop a reading culture in their placement classrooms. As discussed in section 5.2.1, there are some issues with the term 'communities of practice'. This is a common theoretical lens which is introduced to student teachers in their university sessions and perhaps an alternative version such as 'affinity spaces' would be more appropriate. Whilst there are common interests in classrooms, there are not necessarily close ties between members and we need to avoid any potential for labelling children and teachers. Encouraging student teachers to think about this as 'spaces' would support them in providing a more effective environment for children's reading development.

School placements provided for the student teachers need to be carefully considered by Initial Teacher Education programmes. Whilst, universities have to be compliant by providing a breadth of experiences in different schools and age phases, they also need to include opportunities for placements in diverse communities in order to build an awareness of lower socio-economic communities. This will help to eliminate stereotypical notions and deficit thinking and support student teachers to tailor their understanding of reading to children's needs and identities. The provision of school

based tasks relating to the children and their backgrounds will provide a structure for student teachers to learn about the communities via the use of reflective discussion.

Exposure to good classroom practice and modelling by teacher educators and classroom teachers to demonstrate the application of funds of knowledge to learning to read, will support student teachers to seek knowledge regarding pupils' funds of knowledge for incorporation into lessons.

Findings from this research study suggest that the student teachers identified a divide between home and school reading and this also needs to be addressed. If the teachers of the future continue to have the perception that reading at school is not reading for pleasure then it will continue into the next generation of young readers. This has links to the types of texts used in the classroom. Student teachers need to be further encouraged to develop their perspectives and views on what counts as literacy in the twenty-first century in order to progress from the 'traditional' view that reading the 'right things' means the reading of books.

This study also found that discourses at work both inside and outside the classroom could be varied and not always conducive to learning. Student teachers could benefit from a deeper understanding of the different pedagogic discourses and the way in which they could be used for the learning and teaching of reading. Further support on how to blend teaching and cognitive development and mediate this through changing patterns of pedagogic discourse would enable student teachers to advance children's reading by matching the communicative style with the specific purpose. Providing the student teachers with more modelling on using the right kinds of talk will help to strengthen its power and help children to effectively think and learn about their reading. This will provide the student teachers with more confidence to adapt and adjust the pedagogic

discourses in order to reflect the social contexts in which the children are learning to read.

The learning for the student teachers in this study about reading was found to be linked to their own identities. The importance of allowing student teachers to reflect upon their identity to enable them to have a sense of themselves and how they fit into the larger context needs to be recognised. Reflection is a major factor in the shaping of their identities - not just reflection on looking back but also future practices. Student teachers need to be encouraged to articulate their beliefs of the learning and teaching of reading and to develop their reflective thinking. If they are aware of their beliefs and can express them, their practices may become more closely aligned with their beliefs. In addition, reflective activities will support self-awareness of cultural identity and different cultural perspectives. By analysing their own funds of knowledge and their sources and the advantages and disadvantages of drawing upon or ignoring these will support the student teachers to gain multiple perspectives and begin to consider using funds of knowledge to develop culturally responsive practice. This will provide them with empowering approaches and a deeper understanding of their situation.

As well as implications for ITE institutions there are also some clear messages for policy makers resulting from this research study on student teachers' understanding of reading although it is acknowledged that this will not be possible within the existing policy landscape. The student teachers were adept at balancing the different approaches to the teaching of reading according to the needs of the children they were working with. Policy makers need to take note of this and revisit the reading curriculum to look at how it relates to the needs, interests and learning styles of all children including those from low socio-economic backgrounds. If student teachers are identifying this then so should the policy makers. The way in which the reading curriculum is being taught and

why it is taught in this way needs to be critically examined. The teaching and learning of reading must be linked to children's lives and effective pedagogy should be linked to local histories and community contexts. The 'one method fits all' approach to the teaching of reading is not going to work. Policies need to include more sociocultural approaches as they need to connect with broader socio-political contexts. There also needs to be far less isolation, more autonomy and less constraints and standardisation for schools, teachers and student teachers.

Policy makers also need to enable teacher education programmes to be able to both adhere to their own principles and provide a wide exploration of the various models of learning to read in order that student teachers can continue to make informed choices about their practice in the classroom. With the increase in political factors shaping reading pedagogy and teaching being linked to skills, it is even more important that the student teachers see themselves as reflective and capable professionals who can use a variety of teaching strategies according to the children's needs.

6.4 Reflections on the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach

Whilst my study was a general qualitative education research project, it was also influenced by the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach. IPA's concern with trying to understand how participants make sense of their experiences and the resulting individual personal perceptions and accounts was relevant to my own study and thus whilst not adhering rigidly to the approach it was used as a building block on which to base my methodology. As stated in Chapter One, IPA has not been used when analysing student teachers or the understanding of reading. It is therefore relevant to reflect briefly on IPA.

The IPA approach formed a basis for me to demonstrate some sensitivity to the sociocultural context in which the study was based. Working with student teachers there was a need for me to be sensitive to the context through engagement with the idiographic and the particular as I conducted the interviews. The interactional nature of the interviews and lesson observations involved allowed empathy, putting the student teachers at ease and negotiating the issues of power at play. This sensitivity continued through the analysis of the data as I immersed myself into the student teachers' accounts and made sense of how they were making sense of their experiences.

However, of course this can be achieved without adhering to the IPA approach. It was through the sensitive way in which the raw data was engaged with, that the IPA approach was most influential. Using a considerable number of verbatim extracts from the participants enabled their voices to be heard and for them to remain as whole students. Interpretations from these extracts were also presented as possible readings rather than making general claims.

There is an expectation with IPA that commitment will be demonstrated through attentiveness to the participants during the data collection and the care with which the data analysis is carried out. For all the interviews in my study, I tried to ensure that the student teachers were comfortable and that I was listening very closely to their accounts. The in-depth interviews were conducted with rigour, by being consistent when probing and noticing important cues. The analysis was conducted systematically in order to arrive at important aspects about the students as well as common themes.

Both critical sociocultural theory and IPA acknowledge the importance of researchers being involved in examining their own position and its effects on learning and the

production of knowledge. There is no doubt that my understanding has deepened as a result of conducting and writing up this research study.

The findings of this research have made me reflect on my own practice in university sessions. I am aware that I introduce students to the use of digital texts and popular culture in the seminar rooms but perhaps this is still not enough. I did not expect such strong views being expressed by the students about the parents of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds and would like the opportunity to address this through further work with students and the communities in which they are practising.

I have become much more aware of the potential power issue between tutors and students, not only when conducting research but in everyday interactions too. As a teacher educator, this research study has enabled me to understand the world of the student teacher, I have gained an insight into the complex process of learning to teach reading, and into the problems some student teachers encounter. I am more aware of the complexities that student teachers are dealing with and developed a more insightful understanding of their journey as they become teachers of reading.

The ensuing written thesis demonstrated some phenomenological and hermeneutic sensibilities whereby it focused on the particular focal topic of reading which was a significant experiential domain for the student teachers and was interpretative in the way I was making sense of their experiences. Overall, the IPA was a useful approach to take for this study and it is hoped that readers will find the content somewhat interesting, important and useful.

6.5 Limitations of the Research

Exploring the factors influencing student teachers' understanding of reading was the primary purpose of this research. The research was thus conducted within the curriculum area of reading. Other aspects of literacy such as speaking, listening and writing are therefore beyond the scope of this study.

The nature of the research questions as outlined in Section 1.6 limited the scope and thus also the data collection. The focus of the questions was on the influences affecting the student teachers' understanding of reading rather than the wider issues of reading. The sample size was a small one, which although limiting in its range, enabled the individual student's views to be investigated in depth. The complexities of the social situations of the participants was analysed and provided some rich data from which to develop a thesis. The five student teachers were all female as no males volunteered to participate and thus there was a gender imbalance. The reasons why no male students volunteered are unclear. However at the time male students accounted for only 15% of the total cohort.

The research being undertaken in one university institution and in the context of Kent, England has again resulted in it being limited in its study and focus. However, teacher education in England is conducted relatively universally and as such, this research should relate to colleagues in other Initial Teacher Education institutions. Whilst the focus of this research was the learning of reading in English, the theme of student culture and identity may also generate international interest.

6.6 Further Research

There are a number of potential areas for further research that have been identified in this study.

- Following this research study further research could be conducted on student teachers' perceptions of 'class' and the implications of this on their practice.
- This study focused on student teachers' understanding of reading, further research could investigate other areas of the English curriculum such as writing, speaking and listening.
- This research was conducted in the south-east of England; a similar study could involve student teachers outside the area of Kent.
- Further research could be conducted on student teachers' identity and the effects of this on children's learning and development.

6.7 Final Comments

Learning to read is a complex matter and yet the majority of us are able to achieve this. We do this through the support of our own families, our communities and the teachers in our schools. For the teachers of the future there are a myriad of factors involved, including sociocultural beliefs, power and identity. There are aspects of complexity, conformity and confusion involved in student teachers understanding about reading but also much capability and competence. All of this is woven together, in a tapestry of discovery as they move to become teachers of reading. My research has demonstrated just how complicated it can be for student teachers and how my work as a teacher educator is to guide them towards their own unique and adaptable methods. As one of the student teachers commented, 'it's about the whole sort of picture'.

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APPENDIX A

Key Stages in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland

| Key Stage: (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) | Age during school year | England and Wales: National Curriculum (plus Foundation Phase in Wales) | Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Curriculum | Scotland: Curriculum for Excellence |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Foundation | 4-5 | Reception | Year 1 | P1 |
| Key Stage 1 | 5-6 | Year 1 | Year 2 | P2 |
| | 6-7 | Year 2 | Year 3 | P3 |
| Key Stage 2 | 7-8 | Year 3 | Year 4 | P4 |
| | 8-9 | Year 4 | Year 5 | P5 |
| | 9-10 | Year 5 | Year 6 | P6 |
| | 10-11 | Year 6 | Year 7 | P7 |
| Key Stage 3 | 11-12 | Year 7 | Year 8 | S1 |
| | 12-13 | Year 8 | Year 9 | S2 |
| | 13-14 | Year 9 | Year 10 | S3 |
| Key Stage 4 | 14-15 | Year 10 | Year 11 | S4 |
| | 15-16 | Year 11 | Year 12 | S5 |
| A-Levels and SCE Highers (Scotland) – not compulsory | | | | |
| | 16-17 | Year 12 | Year 13 | S6 |
| | 17-18 | Year 13 | Year 14 | |

APPENDIX B

Reading Policies and Documents since 1988

| Policy/Document | Summary |
|--|--|
| <p>1988: <i>English for ages 5 to 11: Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales</i> (first part of the 'Cox Report', which formed the basis for the National Curriculum English Order).</p> | <p>This stated that: 'Reading is much more than the decoding of black marks upon a page: it is a quest for meaning, and one which requires the reader to be an active participant....In their quest for meaning, children need to be helped to become confident and resourceful in the use of a variety of reading cues. They need to be able to recognise on sight a large proportion of the words they encounter and to be able to predict meaning on the basis of phonic, idiomatic and grammatical regularities and of what makes sense in context; children should be encouraged to make informed guesses.'</p> |
| <p>1990: <i>English in the National Curriculum</i>:</p> | <p>This stated that at Level 2 - the expected level for 7-year-olds: 'Pupils should be able to ... use picture and context cues, words recognised on sight and phonic cues in reading....Use a picture to help make sense of a text; ...use initial letters to help with recognising words.'</p> |

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| <p>1993: <i>National Curriculum Council Consultation Report:</i></p> | <p>This stated (under the heading ‘Initial reading skills’) that ‘Level 2 pupils should be able to: ... use more than one strategy (phonic, graphic, syntactic, contextual) when reading unfamiliar words.’</p> |
| <p>1994: <i>English in the National curriculum: Draft proposals:</i></p> | <p>This stated that, ‘Phonic knowledge focuses on the relationships between print symbols and sound patterns. Children should be made aware of the sounds of spoken language, and taught how symbols correspond to those sounds. Opportunities should be given for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening to sounds in oral language to develop phonological awareness; • recognising alliteration, sound patterns and rhyme and relating these to patterns in letters; • considering syllables in longer words; • identifying initial and final sounds in words, including sounds which rhyme; • identifying and using a comprehensive range of letters and sounds (including combinations of letters, blends and digraphs), and paying specific attention to their use in the formation of words; • recognising inconsistencies in phonic patterns. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognising that some letters do not always produce a sound themselves but influence the sound of others, <i>e.g. final 'e', soft 'c'.</i> |
| 1995: <i>English in the National Curriculum:</i> | As per the 1994 draft proposals. |
| 1998: <i>National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching:</i> | <p>This stated that ‘When pupils read familiar and predictable texts, they can easily become over-reliant on their knowledge of context and grammar. They may pay too little attention to how words sound and how they are spelt. But if pupils cannot decode individual words through their knowledge of sounds and spellings, they find it difficult to get at the meaning of more complex, less familiar texts....At Key Stage 1, there should be a strong and systematic emphasis on phonics and other word level skills.</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discriminate between the separate sounds in words; Learn the letters and letter combinations most commonly used to spell those sounds; Read words by sounding out and blending their separate parts; Write words by combining the spelling patterns of their sounds. <p>There were also lists headed ‘High frequency’ words to be taught as “sight</p> |

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| | recognition” words through YR to Y2 – and there was the ‘searchlights’ model. |
| 1998: <i>National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching</i> : | This stated that: ‘Shared reading provides a context for applying and teaching word level skills and for teaching how to use other reading cues to check for meaning, and identify and self-correct errors’. |
| 1999: <i>Progression in Phonics</i> : | This stated that: ‘The most effective phonics instruction teaches children to identify phonemes in spoken language first, then to understand how these are represented by letters and letter combinations (graphemes).’ |
| 2002: <i>Early Literacy Support</i> : | This was designed for children in Year 1 who were having difficulties in learning to read. There was still emphasis on picture cues and context cues. |
| 2003: <i>Sound Sense: The phonics element of the National Literacy Strategy</i> (Report by Greg Brooks on the DfES Phonics Seminar of March 2003): | This included a recommendation to ‘make it clear that, within the 100 most frequent words, only those that are irregular should be taught as sight words’. |
| 2003: DfES response to Brooks paper: | This response also accepted the need for more emphasis on blending. |

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| 2004: <i>Playing with Sounds: A Supplement to Progression in Phonics</i> : | This stated that ‘The high-frequency words listed in the back of the <i>NLS Framework for Teaching</i> are not intended to be taught by rote.... Many of these words are phonically regular and thus perfectly decodable. A proportion are irregular and practitioners teach these as “words with a tricky bit in”. <i>Playing with Sounds</i> also included more emphasis on blending. |
| April 2005: <i>Teaching Children to Read</i> (the report of the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee on its inquiry conducted between November 2004 and February 2005): | ‘We therefore strongly urge the DfES to commission a large-scale comparative study, comparing the National Literacy Strategy with “phonics fast and first” approaches.’ A study of this type was not completed, though the Early Reading Development Pilot was carried out and showed that phonics teaching could be speeded up. Jim Rose was commissioned to carry out a review. His interim report appeared in December 2005 and his final report was published in March 2006. |
| March 2006: <i>Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading</i> (Jim Rose’s final report): | This stated that: ‘Despite uncertainties in research findings, the practice seen by the review shows that the systematic approach, which is generally understood as “synthetic” phonics, offers the vast majority of young children the best and most direct |

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| | route to becoming skilled readers and writers.’ |
| 2007: <i>Letters and Sounds</i> sent out to schools. | This is a synthetic phonics programme. It systematically teaches grapheme-phoneme correspondences and aims for a 50-50 balance between blending-for-reading and segmenting-for-spelling. It warns against the use of picture cues and context cues, and it stresses the importance of using decoding for high-frequency words – full decoding where possible, and partial decoding where words contain grapheme-phoneme correspondences which are rare or which have not yet been taught. |
| 2010: Reading by six: How the best schools do it: | This stated that: ‘The diligent, concentrated and systematic teaching of phonics is central to the success of all the schools that achieve high reading standards in Key Stage 1. This requires high-quality and expert teaching that follows a carefully planned and tightly structured approach to teaching phonic knowledge and skills. |
| 2013: The National Curriculum in England: Key stages 1 and 2 framework document. | ‘The programmes of study for reading at key stages 1 and 2 consist of two dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word reading • comprehension (both listening and reading). |

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| | <p>It is essential that teaching focuses on developing pupils' competence in both dimensions; different kinds of teaching are needed for each.</p> <p>Skilled word reading involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Underpinning both is the understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words. This is why phonics should be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e. unskilled readers) when they start school.</p> <p>Good comprehension draws from linguistic knowledge (in particular of vocabulary and grammar) and on knowledge of the world. Comprehension skills develop through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems and non-fiction. All pupils must be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum. Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading</p> |
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| | also feeds pupils' imagination and opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds'. |
| 2014: Getting them reading early. | This document focuses on early reading including systematic phonics, literacy and inspection methodology. It was written to support the inspection of literacy in schools. |

APPENDIX C

Letter to Student Teachers

Dear

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education and as such I am required to carry out a research project.

My research project will focus on student teachers' understanding of the learning and teaching of reading.

This research aims to add to the literature concerned with the reading development of children and also aims to develop knowledge and understanding of student teacher's reading experiences and the impact of this upon their perceptions of how best to teach children to read.

I am planning to carry out this work with the use of semi-structured narrative interviews with some Year 2 student teachers and I am hoping that you would be willing to take part.

I would hope to be able to meet with you twice, with each discussion taking approximately an hour. I know that at the moment you are incredibly busy writing an assignment and so I will, of course, ensure that any meetings are at your convenience.

All information you give me will be 'anonymised' and treated in strict confidence, which means that no information will be used without your express permission. Any information given to me will not be used in any way to influence your progress on the BA Programme. All notes and tapes will be held in a locked drawer and all transcripts will be held separately on an encrypted, secure PC. A copy of each transcript will be given to you for comment and/or amendment as will a final copy of the outcome of the project. You will be able to withdraw from the project at any time, without giving a reason, should you wish to do so.

Please be assured that you are under no obligation to take part, however if you would like to do so, I would be grateful if you would contact me at your earliest convenience.

Consent Form

Research Project: An exploration of the influences on student teachers' understanding of the learning and teaching of reading, with reference to their cultural backgrounds

Researcher: **CAROLINE TANCOCK**

I agree to take part in the project outlined in the accompanying letter. I understand the nature of the project and the way in which it is to be conducted. I further understand that I may withdraw consent at any time, without giving a reason, should I wish to do so.

A copy of the transcription of each meeting will be made available to me as will a copy of the final report and any subsequent publications. I understand the results of this study may be disseminated through publication and/or at conferences. Confidentiality will always be maintained.

Name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

APPENDIX D

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review Application for Full Review

1. PROJECT DETAILS

| | |
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| MAIN RESEARCHER | Caroline Tancock |
| E-MAIL | caroline.tancock@canterbury.ac.uk |
| POSITION WITHIN CCCU | Senior Lecturer |
| POSITION OUTSIDE CCCU | |
| COURSE (students only) | Doctorate in Education |
| DEPARTMENT (staff only) | Primary Education |
| PROJECT TITLE | An exploration of the influences on student teachers' understanding of the learning and teaching of reading, with reference to their cultural backgrounds. |
| TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: NAME | Dr Viv Wilson |
| TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: E-MAIL | viv.wilson@canterbury.ac.uk |
| DURATION OF PROJECT (start & end dates) | October 2011 – April 2016 |

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| OTHER RESEARCHERS | None |
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2. OUTLINE THE ETHICAL ISSUES THAT YOU THINK ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT.

In order to investigate the cultural capital background of the students, personal information will need to be disclosed and this may be perceived as intrusive.

Some student teachers may feel obliged to take part in the study.

3. GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT in no more than 100 words. (*Include, for example, sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis and expected outcomes.*) Please ensure that your description will be understood by the lay members of the Committee.

This project will investigate the influences on student teachers' understanding of reading and their own reading habits and preferences. It will focus upon the perceived relationship between cultural identity e.g. family, class, ethnicity and gender, and student teachers' perceptions of reading. It will then discuss implications for teacher training and education.

Students will be invited to participate from the whole cohort of Year 1 undergraduate student teachers. In depth interviews of between 6 and 8 students will be conducted. These interviews will be narrative in structure and will enable the exploration of students' developing experiences and attitudes towards reading and the potential effect on the teaching of reading to children in the classroom. Following this some student teachers will be observed teaching children reading in the classroom.

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| 4. How many participants will be recruited? | 4-8 student teachers |
| 5. Will you be recruiting STAFF or STUDENTS from another faculty? | NO |
| 6. Will participants include minors, people with learning difficulties or other vulnerable people? | Children will be involved when the students are teaching in the classroom but they will not be participants in the research. |

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| 7. Potential risks for participants: | Please indicate all those that apply. |
| - Emotional harm/hurt* | YES |
| - Physical harm/hurt | NO |
| - Risk of disclosure | YES |
| - Other (please specify) | |

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| *Please note that this includes any sensitive areas, feelings etc., however mild they may seem. | |
| 8. How are these risks to be addressed? | <p>In order to investigate the cultural background of the students, personal information will need to be disclosed and this may be perceived as intrusive. Questions to be asked at the planning stage will involve whether the information is needed, how it will be used and whether the researcher would be happy themselves if they were asked for this information.</p> <p>Throughout the entire process issues of confidentiality and data protection will be stressed.</p> |
| 9. Potential benefits for participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved services - Improved participant understanding - Opportunities for participants to have their views heard. - Other (please specify) | <p>Please indicate all those that apply.</p> <p>YES - Possibly for future cohorts</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> |

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| 10. How, when and by whom will participants be approached? Will they be recruited individually or en bloc? | Participants will be approached en bloc at the start of their course by the researcher initially and then by tutors on behalf of the researcher. Students will be approached individually by the researcher to arrange interviews. |
| 11. Are participants likely to feel under pressure to consent / assent to participation? | As the research will consist of a case study within my own institution, some student teachers may feel obliged to take part in the study. It will be made clear to the student teachers that they are volunteers and that they do not feel that they have to participate. Informed consent will be received from all the participants. I will also not interview any students for whom I will be marking assessed work. |
| 12. How will voluntary informed consent be obtained from individual participants or those with a right to consent for them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory letter | . |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify) | <p>YES – at the top of the questionnaire</p> <p>NO</p> <p>YES</p> <p>NO</p> <p>Students will be informed that the research forms part of the requirements of the Doctorate in Education. Consent to participate will be assumed by the return of the completed questionnaires. Students to be interviewed will be purposively selected and will be e-mailed with an information sheet, explaining the purpose of the study and the process of the focus group and interview. This will be supported by oral explanation and further clarification if requested. Students will sign a letter of consent.</p> <p>Head teachers of the schools involved in the observations will be contacted by email in order for their consent to be sought.</p> |
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| <p>13. How will permission be sought from those responsible for institutions / organisations hosting the study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify) | <p>Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix.</p> <p>NO</p> <p>NO</p> <p>YES – to the Programme Directors involved at CCCU and Head Teachers of the schools.</p> |
| <p>14. How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be safeguarded? (Please give brief details).</p> | <p>The use of transcripts and material will be anonymised to ensure privacy and confidentiality.</p> <p>The student teachers will be told that in order for maximum benefit to be gained from the study there may be a need to publish findings and disseminate results. Those taking part in the focus groups and interviews will have the opportunity to approve and amend their transcripts.</p> |

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| <p>15. What steps will be taken to comply with the Data Protection Act?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe storage of data - Anonymisation of data - Destruction of data after 5 years - Other (please specify) | <p>Tape-recorded interviews will be destroyed after the Doctorate in Education has been completed. All interview transcriptions will be kept in a locked room and destroyed once the EdD has been completed.</p> <p>When interview data is transcribed names will be coded wherever possible to increase anonymity. Schools will remain anonymous at all times.</p> |
| <p>16. How will participants be made aware of the results of the study?</p> | <p>Participants will have the opportunity to comment on initial outcomes. They will also have the opportunity to read the final report and any subsequent publications.</p> |
| <p>17. What steps will be taken to allow participants to retain control over audio-visual records of them and over their creative products and items of a personal nature?</p> | <p>Once the interview recordings have been transcribed the participants will be given a copy of their responses and asked to verify or amend what has been written. Students taking part will be reminded at each stage that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw. They will also be informed that if they do choose to withdraw their recordings and transcripts will be returned to them or destroyed if they so wish.</p> <p>Interviewees will be sent copies of the interview transcripts for their approval and comments. Recordings may be destroyed by participants if they so wish.</p> |

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| <p>18. Give the qualifications and/or experience of the researcher and/or supervisor in this form of research. (Brief answer only)</p> | <p>Researcher:</p> <p>BA (Hons) Social Science</p> <p>BA (Hons) Humanities</p> <p>MA in English Literature.</p> <p>PGCE</p> <p>Lecturer at Undergraduate and Post Graduate level.</p> |
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| | Supervisors are experienced interviewers in this form of research. |
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DECLARATION

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Researcher's Name: Caroline Tancock

Date: 6th September 2011

APPENDIX E

The Initial Teacher Education Programme

Year 1 (Level 4)

The student teachers studied for a module in the Core subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT and PE. The English sessions for this module constituted an introduction to all the main elements of the teaching and learning of English at primary level. The first session was an introduction to children's literature of which the learning aims were for students to reflect upon their personal understanding of experiences in literacy; how the sharing of texts is an intrinsic part of learning about literacy; and the centrality of high quality literature in children's literacy learning. This initial session was then followed by two seminars on the potential of picture books for the teaching of literacy and consideration of the oral tradition of storytelling.

Three sessions in the course had a specific focus upon the teaching of reading. The first discussed the nature of reading, definitions of reading and how children learn to read with a reflection on the students' own reading practices. The second session looked at emergent reading with an introduction to the teaching and learning of phonics, models of reading and the Rose Report (2006) and the Simple View of Reading. The child as a

developing reader was the focus of the final session with students being introduced to strategies such as shared and guided reading and their role in the teaching of reading. The role of reading schemes in the teaching of reading, the principles of effective teaching of reading and the importance of text choice were also considered as part of this seminar.

Other areas of English teaching and learning were also addressed in this first year of study which included: poetry; short term planning; language development; English as an Additional Language; the role of talk in children's learning and an introduction to writing in the primary classroom.

During the first year, the students attended a school placement of one day a week during the first term which centred on teaching and planning. This was followed by a four week block school placement in the Trinity term.

Year 2 (Level 5)

The second year of the undergraduate programme continued with the themes introduced in year one. There were further sessions on children's literature which explored the notion of 'quality' in children's literature; the importance of teachers having detailed knowledge of children's literature; the significance and implications of personal response to literature; and the range of narrative genres and structures in children's stories.

There were also further sessions on the teaching of reading. The 'exploring phonics and early reading' seminar provided students with the opportunity to develop an understanding of current priorities and policies for the teaching of phonics and early reading, the research base that underpinned these and implications for wider reading development. Key models, principles and concepts of teaching phonics and early

reading was explored with the place of reading within a wider, broad and rich literacy curriculum also considered. A separate session considered in more detail the specific challenges that children with English as an Additional Language face when learning to read in English together with strategies which could be employed to support these learners.

Developing children's reading was the focus of a day conference which included opportunities for students to consider a range of approaches and methods for developing reading proficiency in primary age children with a particular emphasis on exploring strategies for developing word recognition, phonic knowledge and language comprehension. There was a further whole day conference on multi-literacies which introduced students to the learning potential offered by using film media resources in the classroom. Connections between technology, pedagogy and literacy were considered together with key issues and strategies for the classroom.

At the start of the students' second year the Primary education programmes in the university introduced a major initiative on student teacher subject knowledge in order to develop knowledge and understanding in four key areas:

- How texts are organised – features, style and purpose.
- How language works at sentence level including sentence structure, use of punctuation as well as different word classes.
- Word level knowledge such as phonic knowledge, knowledge of spelling patterns, where words originate and their meaning.
- Knowledge of 'quality' children's literature and authors.

Students were involved in identifying their own subject knowledge needs by completing phonics audits, a primary English subject knowledge tracker and a separate phonics

tracker. Additional workshops were organised in order to support the students in developing their subject knowledge.

The school placement in year 2 consisted of a six week block placement at the end of Lent term. Where possible students were expected to observe, teach and receive feedback on their phonics/ early reading teaching.

Year 3 (Level 6)

The final university based sessions consolidated work completed in previous years. The students' studies commenced with a reading conference which had a focus on reading for pleasure as part of learning to read and which revolved around children's books. The first seminar considered how to provide children in school with active, problem-solving contexts for learning using high quality children's literature (including stories, picture books, picture, moving image, media, poetry and non-fiction) as the starting point.

Further input was given on how activities can enable children to engage deeply with children's literature and develop a range of comprehension activities. A follow up task to this session was for the students to choose one text and develop a 'book guide' which could be used as the basis for a unit of work in the classroom. This unit of work needed to include an analysis of the text as well as ideas for shared, guided and independent work and links to curricula documentation.

Students continued to reflect on their understanding and expertise in the teaching of phonics and identified where there were still gaps in their knowledge and experience. Further phonics audits were completed and the subject knowledge trackers commenced in year 2 were continued.

A further session consolidated students' understanding of how children's reading develops including how teacher's talk supports, develops and encourages children's

engagement with texts; guided reading as a tool for teaching, learning and assessment of children's reading; the importance of text choice and the use of literature circles for fluent, confident readers. Ways of contextualising discrete phonics teaching and the application of phonic knowledge, skills and understanding in order to read a text were also addressed. The follow up task to this session was for students to prepare a phonics lesson from one of the phases in *Letters and Sounds* and teach it to other students in the following session.

Although not English based, a session from the Professional Studies module is also of interest for this research study. Students met in small reading groups with a tutor to discuss education and social class. Students were required to read Reay (2006) in preparation for the session and the following discussion examined the perception that educational achievement had become increasingly divided and social mobility had diminished during recent decades. Students and the tutor also considered issues relating to accountability and control, high stakes testing and the teacher's role in enabling children from different social and ethnic backgrounds to succeed. Additional recommended reading following the seminar was Demie and Lewis (2011). In addition as part of this module, the students were asked to read chapters from *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review* (2009) edited by Robin Alexander.

The students' final professional placement occurred in the Lent term and was for eight weeks. At the end of this school practice student teachers were graded against the Teachers' Standards published by the Department for Education in May 2012.

APPENDIX F

Proposed Interview Schedule for Student Teacher: Abigail

Interview One

Discuss ethical procedures

Initial question: Can you tell me a little about yourself as a person e.g. home town, siblings, family, interests etc...

What can you remember about learning to read?

What types of texts did you read as an early reader?

Who read to you/ told you stories?

What were your experiences of reading as an older child?

What is important to you about reading?

What do you think learning to read actually means?

What do you think children need in order to be able to read? Why?

How will you approach the teaching of reading in the classroom? Why?

What types of activities did you engage in on your Year One school placement for the teaching of reading? What types of texts did you use?

To what extent do you think that reading is linked to our cultural values?

What do you think is the biggest influence on the teaching of reading?

To what extent does popular culture have a part to play in children's reading?

Interview Two

Re-visit ethical procedures.

Ask student teacher to discuss the literacy planning and teaching from her second school placement.

How do you think your planning and teaching helped to develop the children's reading in your class?

Would you have completed anything different in terms of your teaching to support children's reading?

Refer back to discussions of popular culture in Interview One – was popular culture used as a resource to support children's reading during this placement?

Refer back to 'reading for enjoyment' – do you feel that the children were engaged in and enjoyed their reading on this placement?

In the last interview we spoke about parental support and how you felt that children who were not reading at home can be disadvantaged in their reading. Did you encounter this on this placement?

In the last interview you also talked about cultural background and that you thought that children from a middle class background are expected to be able to read but that it's not so important for others. Did you encounter examples of this on this placement?

Interview Three:

Re-visit ethical procedures.

How strong does a student teachers' reading comprehension skills need to be?

How does the Primary Education programme prepare you for this?

How do children respond during the process of reading?

Is there a difference between how we read and how we learn to read?

What do we want from children as readers? How can we help them to achieve this?

What knowledge does a student teacher/newly qualified teacher need in order to be able to teach reading?

What is your own philosophy of the teaching of reading?

What is your understanding of your role as a teacher of reading?

To what extent does a student teacher's individual reading experiences play a role in the effectiveness of the teaching of reading?

What are the policy/ political factors involved in the shaping of reading pedagogy?

To what extent are there pressures on student teachers in relation to the teaching of reading?

Do you think that we need to re-consider ways to support trainee teachers in developing their literate identities as well as in becoming literacy teachers?

Interview 4

Re-visit ethical procedures.

Reflect on and discuss the content of the lesson – according to the content.

How did your lesson develop children's reading?

Would you have completed anything differently?

What was the impact on the children's reading development?

One of your main philosophies was about enjoyment and engagement with reading.

How have you been able to get that across to the children while you have been on this placement?

Any change to your own philosophies of the teaching of reading?

How do the children choose their reading books?

What types of texts are used?

Have you had any opportunities for oral storytelling?

Have you had the opportunity to impart your own passion for reading to the children?

Are there any differences in the way you are teaching reading compared to last placement?

In the last interview we discussed the pressures on student teachers regarding the teaching of reading. Have you encountered any of these pressures whilst you have been here?

Discuss again cultural/ socio economic factors – parents/schools and reading.

Is there anything else you would like to comment upon in terms of the teaching of reading in this classroom?

APPENDIX G

Abigail

Lesson Observation Notes

30 children in the classroom

Playscripts

Lesson Objective: to identify the features of a script

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| | | At the start of the lesson the student teacher introduced the focus and two children read the learning objective out loud. |
| 65 | ST | When do we use playscripts? Talk about this with your talk partner. |
| | | <i>(Children spent a few minutes discussing this in pairs. There were some unrelated discussions occurring).</i> |
| 66 | ST | OK, so when do we use playscripts? |
| 67 | C | If you're in a play you have a line which tells you what to say. |
| 68 | ST | Well done... |
| 69 | C | You can use it when you sing. |
| 70 | ST | Yes you could... |
| 71 | C | The Prime Minister would have a script for when he's doing his speech. |
| 72+ | ST | Yes, he would wouldn't he – so that he knows what to say. So who else might use a script? |
| 73 | C | Comic book people like Superman. |
| 74 | ST | That's a good suggestion. |
| 75 | C | Characters, actors. |
| 76+ | ST | Yes – well done. Any characters or actors in a film or play. And who's telling the actors what to do? |
| 77 | C | The boss... |
| 78+ | ST | (Laughs) Yes, the director. Now, I'm going to read you a short playscript. So all look at the board. |
| | | <i>(ST reads a short playscript from the IWB entitled Hey Diddle Diddle).</i> |
| 79 | | What do the bits in brackets tell us? |
| | | <i>(Reads one of the stage directions - the cat stands alone playing the fiddle).</i> |
| 80 | C | It tells the actor what to do. |

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| 81 | ST | Well done – so what’s it called? |
| 82 | C | A stage direction. |
| 83+ | ST | Good – well done...Now Mrs H and myself are going to act out the first scene and be the Cat and the Cow. A – would you be able to help us by playing the part of the little dog? S- the dish? And V the spoon? |
| | | <i>(ST, other TA and children acted out the first scene). Afterwards the ST highlights the line – (laughing) You are so funny. You argue like a married couple).</i> |
| 84+ | ST | A – I really liked your tone of voice when you said that line. How did he know that he needed to use that tone of voice? How does he know not to say ‘laughing’? |
| 85 | C | Because that tells him what to do... |
| 86+ | ST | Yes – it’s the stage direction isn’t it? Now I’m going to give everyone the chance to be the actors in your small groups. |
| | | <i>(Hands out short playscripts to the children. These were differentiated).</i> |
| 87+ | ST | First of all you need to decide on your characters and then read through the playscript. I want you to think about what you are saying, what the stage directions are telling you and what your tone of voice is going to be. So if the stage direction says ‘frowning’ how might your character look? Everyone show me a frowning face. |
| | | <i>(Children pull various facial expressions).</i> |
| 88+ | | Well done...so imagine that you’ve just been told off by your Mum. How are you feeling? How can the character show how he’s feeling? I’m going to be looking for lovely acting. What your character is doing and saying and more importantly how they are saying it. |
| | | <i>(Children work in groups).</i> |
| | | |
| 89+ | ST | Talk to your partner – what have you learnt about a playscript? What are the features of a playscript? |
| 90 | C | The words in the brackets tell you what to do. |
| 91 | ST | Good – what are they called? |
| 92 | C | Stage directions. |
| 93 | ST | Why do we need stage directions? |
| 94 | C | Because so you know what to do. |
| 95 | ST | How to do it too. The stage directions tell us what and how. |
| 96 | C | A cast. |
| 97 | ST | OK – what’s a cast? |
| 98 | C | Like a weather forecast. |
| 99 | ST | A good suggestion... T...? |
| 100 | C | What character they are. |
| 101 | ST | Yes. |
| | | <i>(Student teacher shows the class the cast).</i> |
| 102 | ST | It shows all the characters in the scene. L... |

| | | |
|------|----|---|
| 103 | C | Italics. |
| 104+ | ST | Yes the stage directions are written in italics. This shows that it is really clear that they are stage directions. Ti... |
| 105 | C | Names at the side. |
| 106 | ST | Yes that tells us who is doing the speaking. |
| 107 | TA | There is a narrator. They're not in the play though. |
| 108+ | ST | Yes – what does the narrator do? Talk to your talk partner. OK – what is the narrator? |
| 109 | C | Someone who's telling you information. |
| 110 | ST | Well done. |
| 111 | C | I think... it tells the story. |
| 112 | ST | Yes... |
| 113 | C | Might tell you where to go... |
| | | <i>(ST shows an example of the narrator).</i> |
| 114 | ST | The narrator is talking directly to the audience. Whereas the other characters talk to each other |
| 115 | C | Sometimes actors talk to the audience. |
| | | <i>(ST does not respond).</i> |

Rachel

Lesson Observation Notes

Poetry Year 6

19 children in the classroom

Analysing war poetry.

Lesson Objective: to analyse the application of poetry techniques.

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 1 | ST | Can anyone remember what we learnt in yesterday's literacy lesson? |
| 2 | | <i>(Lack of response from the children)</i> |
| 3 | ST | Talk to the person next to you and help each other remember yesterday's lesson. I'll give you a clue – it was to do with poetry. |
| 4 | ST | OK, so what did we learn? |
| 5 | C | We read a poem about building roads and breaking stones. |
| 6 | ST | Well done, we did. What did we notice about this poem? – it was called Breaking Stones. |
| 7 | C | We looked for ass...ass... |
| 8 | | <i>(Children laugh)</i> |
| 9 | ST | Can someone help her out? |
| 10 | C | Ooh – I think I know. Assonance. |
| 11 | ST | Well done and what does assonance mean? |
| 12 | C | Stones and bones. |
| 13 | C | Yes... vowel sounds. |
| 14 | ST | Can you tell me more...? |
| 15 | C | It's kind of where the vowels rhyme in words. |
| 16+ | ST | Excellent and we looked at how the words were rhyming in the middle rather than at the end of the words. Well, today we're going to be looking at some different poetry techniques and more poems. I'm going to start by reading you quite an old poem. It's called Dulce et decorum est by Wilfred Owen |
| 17 | | <i>(Student teacher reads Dulce et decorum est by Wilfred Owen out loud to the children.)</i> |
| 18 | ST | What do you think the poem is about? |
| 19 | C | War and soldiers dying... |
| 20 | C | Yes and people drowning... |
| 21 | ST | The poem was written by Wilfred Owen during a war – which war might it have been? |
| 22 | C | World War Two. |
| 23 | ST | Earlier... |
| 24 | C | World War One. |
| 25 | ST | Talk together on your tables – how does the poem make you feel? |
| 26 | | <i>(Children are given time to discuss with their peers their emotions following the reading of the poem).</i> |

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 27 | ST | OK – who would like to tell us all, how the poem made you feel? |
| 28 | C | About marching. |
| 29 | ST | Mmmm... |
| 30 | C | Wounded back... |
| 31 | ST | Someone else... |
| 32 | C | I think it's about soldiers trying to get their mask on – fumbling... |
| 33 | ST | I like that word 'fumbling'. Earlier this week we looked at powerful words and I think fumbling is a powerful word. Have a look to see if you can find any other powerful words in the poem. |
| 34 | C | Smothering. |
| 35 | C | Gas! Gas! |
| 36 | C | Froth –corrupted lungs... |
| 37 | ST | Yes – they are all powerful words. |
| 38 | C | Drowning in gas... |
| 39 | ST | There's something special about the words 'drowning in gas' – does anyone know what type of poetic device this is? |
| 40 | | <i>(Lack of response from the children).</i> |
| 41 | ST | How would somebody usually drown? |
| 42 | C | In the sea... |
| 43 | ST | Yes – in water. So we wouldn't drown in gas so... |
| 44 | C | Is it a metaphor? |
| 45 | ST | Well done – yes it is a metaphor. Now, I'd like you to look at the last two lines – Dulceet Decorum est/ Pro patria mori. What language do you think this is? |
| 46 | C | It could be Spanish... |
| 47 | ST | Why do you think it's Spanish? |
| 48 | C | Cos it sounds like the language I heard on holiday. |
| 49 | ST | Good try – but it's not Spanish. |
| 50 | C | I think it might be Latin. |
| 51 | ST | Well done – it is Latin. How did you know? |
| 52 | C | It sounds like a spell from Harry Potter and they're Latin... |
| 53 | ST | Ahh of course. |
| 54 | | <i>(Much reaction from the children).</i> |
| 55 | ST | Well it's not a spell – it actually means 'It is sweet and right to die for your country'. Why do you think Wilfred Owen has put this in a poem about war? |
| 56 | C | Well people die in war... |
| 57 | C | Yes and you've tried to save your country. You've done the dutiful thing but died. |
| 58+ | ST | Great suggestions. I think Wilfred Owen was actually saying that war is so awful that perhaps it's not a good thing to die for your country. Wilfred Owen wrote this poem when he was in hospital himself during the first world war. I think the poem has a lot of atmosphere and the first time I read the poem was in a war cemetery in... in Belgium. Now, I'm going to give you some more war poems to look at and they're from different wars. You need to read the poems in your groups and then write comments on the sheet I've given you. |
| 59 | C | I don't like poetry. |

| | | |
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| 60 | ST | Well, if you think that you don't like poetry then it's because you haven't found the right poem yet. The first thing you need to do for each of the poems is to say what it's about. Then have a look to see if you can find a rhyming structure... look to see if there is any similes, metaphors, personification and assonance. After that you need to look for emotive words ... what do I mean by emotive words? |
| 61 | C | Feeling words... |
| 62 | C | Happy... sad... |
| 63 | ST | Good and then last of all say whether you like the poem or not and why? Remember that we can all interpret poems in different ways and you may not think the same as the people in your group. But that's a good thing about poetry... |
| 64 | | (Children were given the opportunity to engage and analyse a variety of different war poems from different wars. Anthem for Doomed Youth by Wilfred Owen (1917), Last Stand by Alex Cockers (2010), The Call by Jessie Pope (1915) and Sister by Mike Subritzky (2001). |

| Title and author of poem | What is this poem about? Soldiers? Loved ones back at home? Fighting? | What rhyming structure does this poem have? Which poetic tools are being used? | List five words from the poem that are 'emotive'. | Write a comment about this poem. Do you like it? Why? |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <i>Anthem for Doomed Youth</i> by Wilfred Owen (1917) | | | | |
| <i>Last Stand</i> by Alex Cockers (2010) | | | | |
| <i>The Call</i> by Jessie Pope (1915) | | | | |
| <i>Sister</i> by Mike Subritzky (2001) | | | | |

APPENDIX H

Sample Pages of Analysis Grid

| Temporary Construct | Notes and source | Second order constructs | Third order constructs | Themes |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Students learning to read | Can't recall learning to read (INT 1.1:3) (INT2.1:2) (INT4.1:1) Not with Phonics and sounds (INT5.1:1) Being read to before bed (INT 3.1:1) Staged books (INT5.1:1) Preferred to listen to stories rather than read (INT5.1:4) Hated getting it wrong (INT5.1:6) Stages and decoding – meaning came later (INT4.1:1) Pressures and imitation (INT4.1:1) | Social practice Pressures on children | Cultural/ literate Identity Personal Experiences Student as reader Socio – cultural influences Social dimensions of learning – reading related to culture Contrast to teaching phonics today Pressures on children Internal influences | Childhood experiences. Balancing of approaches. |
| Influence of own family | Reading at home (INT1.1:3) (INT2.1:2) Reading of stories at home (INT1.1:3) (INT2.1:2) (INT 3.1:1) (INT 3.1:4) (INT5.1:1) (INT4.1:5) | Social aspect | Cultural/ literate Identity Student as reader Socio – cultural influences Reading culture at home. Exploration Home literacy | Childhood experiences. Reading in the home links to sociocultural practices – communities of practice, literacy practices. |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| | <p>Books around the house (INT1.1:3)</p> <p>Reading together as a family (INT1.1:3) (INT 3.1:1)</p> <p>Influence of father (INT2.1:2)</p> <p>Father not a reader (INT5.1:2)</p> <p>Reading stories not a major part of family life (INT5.1:3)</p> <p>Learning came after (INT2.1:2)</p> <p>Exploration rather than a process (INT2.1:2)</p> <p>Really started reading at 9/10 (INT 3.1:1)</p> | <p>Own literate identity</p> <p>Student not a reader</p> | <p>Power</p> <p>Discourse</p> <p>Communities of practice in the home</p> <p>Role models</p> <p>Internal influences</p> | <p>Participation</p> |
| Popular Culture and learning to read | <p>Beliefs about reading (INT1.1:6,7,8)</p> <p>Not used in the classroom (INT1.2:2)</p> <p>As a starting point (INT2.1:4)</p> <p>Reading the film and understanding (INT 3.1:9)</p> <p>Definitely a place for the use of popular culture (INT5.1:5)</p> <p>Has a place in teaching (INT4.1:3)</p> | <p>Tapping into children's interests</p> | <p>Beliefs about learning to read</p> <p>Internal influences</p> <p>Socio-cultural influences</p> <p>Traditional middle class view of literacy Linked to own cultural upbringing</p> <p>Ideology – high culture</p> | <p>The 'right things to read'</p> |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| | | | <p>Own experiences – View reading is linked to children’s interests</p> <p>Influence of own culture</p> | |
| Learning to read - definition | <p>Enjoyment (INT1.1:8) (INT1.3:3) (INT1.4:2)</p> <p>Reading because you want to (INT1.1:8)</p> <p>Engaged and enjoyment of reading in school – not sure (INT1.2:2)</p> <p>Children’s response to reading linked to interests (INT1.3:2)</p> <p>Children’s response – choice (INT2.2:3)</p> <p>Children’s response-involvement (INT 3.2:4)</p> <p>Learning to read and how we read – learning to read = skills (INT1.3:3)</p> <p>Learn to read because we have to but read for enjoyment, (INT 3.2:6)</p> | <p>Conceptualisation of reading</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Social</p> <p>Social aspect</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Home /school</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Community of readers</p> | <p>Beliefs about learning to read giving an insight into students’ ideology</p> <p>Discourses</p> <p>Conceptualisation of reading</p> <p>Discourse of fun and enjoyment</p> <p>Skills ↔ Social</p> <p>Skills first then comprehension and enjoyment</p> <p>Home/school</p> <p>Internal influences</p> <p>Socio-cultural influences</p> <p>Clear identity as a teacher here</p> <p>Power of the policies and the institution. Identity as a student teacher</p> <p>Grappling with identity here and focus on cognitive</p> | <p>Disparities</p> <p>Balancing of approaches</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|---|
| | <p>Experience, involvement. Home/school. (INT4.1:6)</p> <p>Children as readers – communication (INT1.3:3)</p> <p>Part of a community (INT 3.2:6)</p> <p>Making sense of symbols on a page (INT2.1:4)</p> <p>Understanding (INT2.1:4)</p> <p>Alphabet and sounds (INT2.1:4)</p> <p>Hard to define (INT2.1:4)</p> <p>Children learning to read in contrast to own experience (INT2.2:5)</p> <p>Understanding rather than decoding (INT 3.1:5)</p> <p>Words and understanding of those words (INT5.1:4)</p> <p>To get information (INT5.1:4)</p> | <p>Skills based. This is student who has no interest in reading</p> <p>Skills based. This is student who has no interest in reading</p> <p>Reverts back to skills</p> | <p>skills. Power of policy</p> | <p>Participation</p> <p>Pressures and Constraints</p> <p>Access to discourses</p> |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|---|

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| | <p>children. (INT4.1:4,5)</p> <p>Parents not readers themselves (INT4.1:12)</p> <p>No idea of what home life is like (INT4.1:12)</p> | | | |
| Requirements of learning to read | <p>Beliefs about reading (INT1.1:14)</p> <p>Alphabet, sounds, model, grammar (INT2.1:5)</p> <p>Patience, learning the techniques, support, structure (INT5.1:4,5)</p> <p>Alphabet and sounds and comprehension. Seen as a loaded question. (INT4.1:9)</p> | <p>Skills</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Skills into ideological. Relates to own experience.</p> <p>Political influences?</p> | <p>Beliefs about learning to read</p> <p>Skills ↔ Social</p> <p>Home/school</p> <p>Internal/external influences</p> <p>Cognitive</p> <p>Socio-cultural influences</p> <p>Student's ideology linked to her own experiences Again juggling with her own identity as a reader and what she is experiencing in schools</p> | <p>Disparities</p> <p>Balancing of approaches</p> <p>Pressures and Constraints</p> |
| Influences on reading | <p>Beliefs about reading (INT1.1:14,15)</p> <p>Key role of the family (INT1.1:15,16)</p> <p>Pressures on schools and ultimately students as teachers (INT 3.1:12)</p> | <p>Wider picture</p> <p>Skills and targets</p> | <p>Beliefs about learning to read</p> <p>Power</p> <p>Skills ↔ Social</p> <p>Home/school</p> <p>Internal/external influences</p> <p>Socio-cultural influences</p> | <p>Disparities</p> <p>Balancing of approaches</p> <p>Participation</p> <p>Pressures and Constraints</p> <p>Who has the power?</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| | <p>Targets and influence of parents. (INT5.1:10)</p> <p>Teacher and their own attitude towards reading (INT4.1:14)</p> | | <p>Traditional view of literacy Notion of funds of literacy Student ideology – where is this coming from? Larger systems of power? Ideology</p> <p>Traditional view – reading linked to books</p> | |
|--|--|--|---|--|